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Catherine Nassau

FATHER CONNELL,

BY

THE O'HARA FAMILY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

T. C. NEWBY, 65, MORTIMER ST., CAVENDISH Sq.

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FATHER CONNELL.

CHAPTER I.

THE parish priest of —— parish, about thirty-five years ago, counted half-way between seventy and eighty; yet, he was a hale, sturdy, man, without any droop in his figure, or any indication of old age about him—this appearance resulting from an excellent natural constitution, habits of great temperance and regularity, and an abundance of healthful exercise, on foot and on horseback,—indeed, in every possible way.

He used to walk along, with his chest ex-

panded, his shoulders thrown back, his head quite erect, his arms hanging straight by his sides, and his fingers closed on the palms of his hands, and almost always working against them. His face showed scarce a wrinkle, and it was florid;—not red and white, however, like some old people's faces, nor yet purple like those of others, as if the smaller blood vessels had burst, and become congealed, within the surface of their skins;—but it was overspread with a still rosy colour of health. His forehead was expansive, and, at the temples, square; his eyes were blue, and generally expressing thought, and abstraction—in which state, they used to stare straight-forward, almost without ever blinking;—yet, they often relaxed into a smiling, or, as it might be, moistened expression; during which change they appeared half closed, and opened and shut very fast indeed. His scarcely grizzled eye-brows, were bushy and protruding; his nose was long, large, but well formed, and with a broad back. His lips

were full, and for his age, remarkably red and handsome.

But above all, there was about his countenance the indications of a great singleness, and primitiveness, and beauty of character;—so that if you met him, stepping measuredly, yet almost springingly along his suburb street, or the adjacent roads, and silently moving his lips, and working, as usual, the palms of his hands with his fingers, and taking no notice of you, though perhaps you might be an intimate friend, and his old eyes winking, and his whole face smiling to itself, you must inevitably have said, that the smile was not provoked by any object or circumstance then noticed by him, but rather that it came from a heart enjoying, at that moment, the sunshine of a virtuous, and therefore very happy intention; or—excuse poor, human vanity, even in its least offensive shape—recollection, perhaps.

Since the day he had become a clergyman, father Connell had never altered the form or

the texture of any article of his attire. He still wore the curious head-dress which his present biographers have already endeavoured to describe—in their tale of John Doe in fact—as worn by father O' Clery—or indeed, if they had told the perfect truth, by the celebrated Irish friar, father O' Leary. It consisted of an article made of goat's hair, or of horse hair, protruding, from above the ears, down to the neck, into a curled yet formal mass, daily dressed with powder and pomatum;—and above this rampart arose a round, almost conical continuation of the wig, very smoothly slicked down, and slightly, but sharply peaked in the middle of the forehead. When a hat was placed upon the structure, it rested on the frizzled bulwark, of course, and therefore never descended lower than about the middle of the back of the head. And the hat which father Connell at least wore with his grotesque head-clothing, was a good match for it;—being very low-crowned, and exceedingly broad brimmed.

Our priest's black coat, sloped to the skirts, and those skirts were enormously ample, and had great pocket flaps across them, mohair buttons, also on a gigantic scale, ornamenting both. His waistcoat was collarless, and fell, again, with huge pocket flaps, nearly to his mid thigh. His black small-clothes were tightened at his knees by large silver buckles; and blue worsted stockings covered his legs; and his sharp pointed shoes also exhibited, across the insteps, silver buckles of great dimensions. Snow could not be whiter than his muslin stock, nor than the indication of his inner garment, every day in the year; and in winter, an outside coat of dark blue, or, as it was then called a "jock," with a little round cape, hanging scarcely half way down his back, while its skirts did not come lower than his knees, formed his protection against inclement weather.

And thus attired, Father Connell, while walking along the streets of the adjacent town.

necessarily displayed, joined with his peculiarities of mien, face, and bearing, before noticed, an air of eccentricity which passers-by, not very well, or at all acquainted with him, would stop to criticise; while he himself, good man, remained perfectly unaware that anything about him or in him deserved particular notice

CHAPTER II.

It was Twelfth Night. Six o'clock, the hour for vespers in father Connell's little parish chapel, gingled from a little, cracked bell, set up at the top of a ruined, square, Norman castle, some distance from the half tolerated place of worship; for at that time there existed a law that no Catholic house of prayer should summon its congregation from its own walls by means of a bell; and, in removing the illegal monitor from immediate contact with his chapel, the priest hoped to elude the pains and penalties awarded by this large-minded

piece of legislation, for any breach of its mandate.

So, the little old cracked bell was ringing ; the candles in the two badly gilded, wooden branches, which hung from the ceiling of the chapel, had been lighted ; and six others, supported by tall candlesticks, also wooden, and badly gilded, on the altar, were in process of illumination, by the agency of a very handsome little boy, with auburn hair, which curled and glittered over his white surplice, as far as his shoulders ; and the people summoned to evening devotion, were coming in ; or, after bending before the sacrament, enclosed in the altar tabernacle, were decently taking their places throughout the poor building.

In the centre of the chapel certain moveable seats, technically called the choir, were arranged. When put together they formed three sides of a long parallelogram, running from the semicircular railing around the altar (which enclosed a space called the sanctuary)

to nearly the other end of the edifice. The top of this choir consisted of three old, worm-eaten chairs, with high, triangular backs, of which the middle one aspired to the dignity of an arm chair, and further in assumption of its dignity, it stood upon a kind of little dais, one or two steps above the clay and mortar floor. At right angles with these old seats, and almost touching them at either hand, were two long benches with railed backs; while plain forms continued the side lines of the parallelogram, down to, as has been said, the railings before the altar.

It need not be said that the old arm chair, of little ease, was occupied by Father Connell, during vespers; while its two humble attendants were filled by his two curates. The confronting benches, proceeding from them towards the altar, afforded places to very religious men, wearing long linen garments; and after them, to little boys, wearing nice muslin surplices—the most eminent for good

conduct in every way, to be found in the parish, as well as being the most distinguished for attention to certain small official duties of the chapel—*enfants de prêtre* in fact. And upon the forms continuing the lines of the benches, sat a second class of pious men and boys, not indeed robed in white, but still honoured with the distinction of immediately assisting in the chaunt of the vespers—although, be it noticed, every man, woman, and child of the congregation, might, if he or she liked, do the same thing.

While the places in the choir reserved for the unrobed men and boys were being taken possession of by them, the other pious men and boys, who wore the long linen dresses and muslin surplices, were assisting each other, in the proper adjustment of their attire, in a little sacristy, at the back of the altar, and approachable from the chapel, first by a kind of gateway in the middle of its railed enclosure, and then by a door at one of the sides. Father Connell's

curates already stood robed ; and the old priest himself, knelt, in silent prayer, to a kind of desk, in a corner—no one around him, speaking above his breath.

He arose, and proceeded to put on his ceremonial surplice. To aid him in this task, immediately bounded forward the very handsome, glossy-haired boy, who has been seen lighting the tall candles on the altar, and who, that business ended, had been waiting in the sacristy to enjoy the honour of discharging a conferred duty of a higher degree. In his buoyant eagerness to exhibit as an expert priest's valet, he happened to tread too familiarly upon one of father Connell's feet ; at which, smarting a good deal, and therefore a little ruffled at first, the clergyman suddenly turned round upon him ; but so soon as his eye rested upon the half penitent, half-laughing face of the blooming urchin, he could not help—for the old man loved the boy—smiling in sympathy ; and then he took him by the ear, in a make-believe

show of punishing him, while thumb and finger pressed no harder than could a touch of velvet have done, and proceeded to address the offender.

“Neddy Fennell,” it was in a whisper he spoke, and there was a curious contrast between his assumed tone of reproof, and the reflection in his eyes of the glances of his half spoiled pet; “Neddy Fennell will you ever stop doing mischief? Neddy, while you are in the house of God my child, you must behave quietly, and with decorum and gravity; in the fields you may jump and play, Neddy Fennell, but in God’s own house you must, I say, be orderly and well behaved.” And again he feigned to inflict punishment on the boy’s ear, only playing in the mean time with the little silky-surfaced organ. The moment he let it go, Neddy Fennell, covering it with his own hand, assumed such a farcical face of mock terror and suffering, and so well acted the part of pretending to wipe off his surplice imaginary drops of blood, which had trickled on it from

the tyrannical pressure of the priest's finger and thumb, that his little companions, amongst whom he now resumed his place, grew red in the faces, with the efforts they made to suppress their laughter.

The priest having adjusted his surplice, at the vestment press, stood inactive for a moment as if in thought, and then turned round and spoke in a low voice to all those who stood by :

“ The men and the boys of the choir are to wait here in the sacristy after vespers for me ; I have something very particular to say to them.”

No one distinctly replied, but there was a murmur of assent, with a bending of many heads which gave a sufficiently satisfactory answer.

After pausing, in reverential recollection of what he had next to do, Father Connell gave a well known signal, by waving to and fro the back of his hand—and there was dignity in the motion ; and thereupon the men of the

choir, in their white linen dresses, issued out of the sacristy into the chapel, two by two, holding their joined hands before them, and after them went the little boys wearing surplices, imitating their elders, as well as they could, in every respect. In passing through the railed-in space before the altar, all and each bent their knees and bowed, as the general congregation had done on entering the chapel, to the veiled sacrament; and then proceeded to assume the places we have before mentioned as allotted to them. Finally father Connell and his curates quitted the sacristy, and in passing, he knelt praying on the steps of the altar; after which taking his throne, his two reverend assistants at his either side, vespers began by his giving out, after some prefatory form, and in a fine old voice, the magnificent psalm of "Dixit Dominus." He was answered by the whole strength of the congregation, young and old, in the result of whose efforts, although perfect accordance or harmony did not indeed

occur, there was much of impressive devotion, which ought to have given satisfaction to any good heart; and thus continued the vespers, through a succession of many of the most beautiful of the psalms, the pastor always beginning each psalm. But we had almost forgotten to notice that the individuals particularly entitled to take up the responses, were a row of pious women, wearing ample white dresses, with hoods that came over their heads, and almost over their faces, who occupied a form within the railing before the altar, as well as by young girls in the galleries, indifferently well instructed in their occasional services by the old, perpetual clerk of the chapel—himself, by the way, not a very eminent musician.

Vespers ended. All the lay persons previously occupying the “choir” returned from the chapel into the sacristy, and employed themselves in taking off and folding up their chapel attire; and then all awaited the re-entrance of their parish priest, as he had

desired them to do. Were there none among them who well understood what his formal intimation before vespers meant? Ay, indeed, a good many, boys as well as men; and they could scarcely now suppress, although, under the influence of a decorous feeling, they had lately done so, indications of their knowledge of Father Connell's intentions towards them, for the evening. It was twelfth night, in fact, and the majority of them knew his practices well.

He came back to them; he gravely unrobed himself, not confronting them; he bent his head over his clasped hands; and then he turned round, and, his face shining with the delight which he knew he was about to impart to his auditors, said—

“ My good friends and little children, this is the season for offering with pure and light hearts, to a good and great God, praises both in solemn hymns, and in cheerful acts, for the wonderful and merciful bounty of his coming to redeem and save us, and my friends and you

my little children, we have returned here after singing praises and thanksgivings to the Lord of Heaven and of earth; and He in his love will not be displeased if we now enjoy ourselves in making use—temperately, however, and very temperately—of some of the good things which he has placed at our disposal—yes, my friends, big and little, we will now make merry amongst ourselves; so come after me, my good friends and little children: it is Twelfth Night, and we ought to rejoice, and we will rejoice; come—I have prepared a little treat for you—come after me and let us rejoice.”

Father Connell and his invited guests had not far to go to their house of entertainment, for it was not more than a hundred paces from the chapel. He stopped at the head of his troop—the urchins partly composing it, shouting shrilly though in a low key, and the pious men chuckling at their antics—he stopped, we say, before the humble entrance door to his thatched

dwelling, and after laughing heartily himself, knocked loudly. His old housekeeper, whose business it had been to prepare for the *soirée*, and who therefore expected the throng of revellers, quickly opened the portal to his summons, and, as amiably as her curious nature and habits would permit, bid every body welcome.

Mrs. Mulloy was a peculiarity in her way ;—tall, coarsely featured, pock-marked, and with an authoritative something like a beard, curling on her doubled chin ; and almost fat in person and in limbs. Her bearing was lofty ; her look arbitrary if not severe, and in every respect she seemed fully sensible of the importance of her station as house-keeper to her parish priest ;—though it was whispered that even upon him, the source from which she derived all her consequence, Mrs. Mulloy did not always hesitate to forbear from dictatorial remonstrances, whenever in the exercise of his charitable extravagance, she was pleased to

detect a wasteful system of dissipation. Let it be added that her voice was the contrary of what Shakespeare calls :—

“ An excellent thing in woman.”

and that her master was a little afraid of its not unfrequent eloquent exercise.

Yet on the present occasion, allowing, as a great rarity, her usual inhospitality to unbend a little, Mrs. Mulloy, inspired by the pervading spirit of the hilarity of the season, did as we have hinted, behave very graciously in her capacity as portress.

“ Welcome then,” she huskily said, “ welcome all, and *cead mille a faultha*, to the twelfth-night’s faste; come in, your reverence;—come in, men and boys, every mother’s son o’ ye.”

“ Come in my children,” echoed the old priest, gleeishly, “ come in, in the name of God;” and he bustlingly led the way into his white-washed, earthen-floored, and only

sitting room ; in the black marble chimney piece of which was, however, rudely carved a mitre, indicating that the paltry apartment had once, and very recently been inhabited by a roman catholic bishop ; but such was the fact ; and such were the times. Father Connell was himself Catholic dean of his diocese.

Seats of every description had been arranged all round the parlour ; in its centre stood a large square table, at the four corners of which was a mighty jug filled with ale, whose froth puffed over and adown the sides of each vessel. Rows of delft mugs were placed at the edges of the table ; but the crowning feature of the Twelfth-night's feast, was a great two-handled osier basket, filled and pyramidically heaped up with brown-skinned, shining cakes of a fragrance so delicious as to perfume the apartment, and penetrating so keenly the nasal nerves of at least the younger portion of the guests as to give them fair promise of the capability of the contents of that basket to

gratify equally and even more satisfactorily another of the senses. We could dilate at great length on the marvellous and long inherited excellence of these cakes. In our childhood they were termed, after the name of their then manufacturer, “Biddy Doyle’s cakes;” in generations farther back they had borne, out of reverence to their great inventor, the appellation of “Juggy Fowler’s cakes;” and Juggy Fowler had sold or bequeathed to Biddy Doyle the secret of making them;—but Biddy Doyle died suddenly and intestate, so that the grand secret died with her; and alas, from that day to this, no succeeding *artiste* has possessed genius enough, truly to imitate, in the estimation of the experienced, Juggy Fowler’s far famed and unique condiment.

We have enumerated all the dainties provided by Father Connell for his twelfth night’s *soirée*, nor did he in his heart deem any thing better or rarer could have been supplied on the occasion, in which opinion not one of his

company differed from him ; for indeed when they had taken their places, as exactly observed by them in “ the Choir ” at vespers, around the board, but at a distance from it, a set of happier faces could not on that same evening have been seen at any other board, no matter how costly, nor in any other mansion, no matter how magnificently contrasted with the poor priest’s parlour. Our host hurried about, as if his very heart and soul were in the scene ;—though why our mysterious “ as if ? ” There is no doubt at all upon the subject ; his heart and soul *were* in it. With one or two favourites assisting him, he walked round and round the circle until each individual of it held a “ Biddy Doyle ” in one hand and a merry mug of ale in the other ; and he patted the children on the head ; or rallied the men on their peculiarities ; or joined in their homely jests upon each other ; and loud and general arose the frequent laugh, in which none joined more gleeishly than he did ; and almost as frequent as his laughter,

and fully as loud, were his calls upon "Peggy," to replenish from the half barrel, under the stairs, the gigantic jugs which stood at the four corners of the square old oak table in the middle of the banquet hall.

Be it understood that all the members, men and boys, of our old friend's choir were unpaid volunteers; and moreover, of a very humble class in society; in fact working masons, or slaters, or carpenters, and so forth, or else very inferior shop-keepers—and with few exceptions, the sons of all such. And yet with these men and boys our good priest laughed, jested and made merry; and anon, story-telling, himself setting the example, became the order of the evening. And a few of these we shall here glance at, while others of them, reported more at length, will be found in another place.

Jack Moore, then, a very tall, uncouthly shaped mason, recounted how all the neighbourhood in which he dwelt, had, a few

evenings before, been “frightened to death” by the sudden coming to life, after *her* death, of “ould Alice Mahony.”

The body of ould Alice had, as Jack stated, been “laid out” to be waked, on the door of the room in which she died—taken off its hinges for the purpose, a common expedient in such emergencies, and on it her lifeless body lay stretched, with a handsome shroud on. There was plenty of snuff and tobacco for all the attendants at the wake, and plenty of gossip going on. The town clock—(yes, Mrs. Radcliffe!)—solemnly—tolled—twelve—when up sprang old Alice on her temporary couch, and without quite opening her eyes, sat on her heels, and, almost thrusting her knees against her teeth, as she had been much used to do before she died. Upon this, out ran, except two or three, the throng who had previously been waking her, tumbling helter-skelter over each other, and those who were last in the race wildly screaming in terror,

and swearing that she was bounding after them, bird-like, though with some little assistance from her shrivelled arms. And here ended Jack Moore's story; Jack, a man of reserved and not very exploring habits of mind, solemnly and contentedly dropping it at this point of interest.

Tim Brennan, "the stone cutter," supplied, however, a commentary on the wonderful tale—he having been one of the very few self-collected persons, who had remained behind in the wake-room, after Alice sat up on the door; and he explained that the solitary and neglected creature had died suddenly, quite alone, with her nether limbs crippled up; had been so found by some chance visitors the next morning, cold and stiff; that, in order to straighten her "dacently," and make her "a handsome corpse," her now attentive old female neighbours had hit on the expedient of strapping across her knees, and of nailing down, at either side of her bier, something not sufficiently strong for

their purpose; that in process of time this badly constructed piece of machinery gave way; that consequently, the death-rigid limbs suddenly resumed the position in which He, the Master, had confirmed them;—and that was all—so that Alice had not indeed come to life; and her body, instead of voluntarily jumping off the old door, had only rolled off it; and she had all along been stone dead, and was now decently buried to the heart's content of any one who might choose to satisfy himself on the subject. But Jack Moore gave no credit to this account of the matter; for his own eyes had been witnesses of the real event: he was one of the very first to run out after plainly seeing old Alice bounce upon her heels to the floor; and as undeniable proof of his assertions, he exhibited a contusion on his lip, which he had received by knocking it against the top of the head of a much shorter man than himself, while that person impeded his way, during their joint escape from the old woman's leap-jack kind of

pursuit after them. In the dubious state of mind in which these two readings of the matter left the audience, there was now no laughter, nor even smile; their entertainer being the only person amongst them who continued to chuckle heartily.

Jeff Corrigan's story came next. He recounted the miraculous finding, very early one morning, of the well known night cap of James Dullard, the weaver, on the only remaining pinnacle of the old castle near at hand, and before noticed as affording a legal place for the little cracked bell used in summoning Father Connell's congregation to prayers.

Old Jim Dullard had, upon a certain night, fallen asleep at his loom; and while he dozed, he seemed to dream that somehow he was in the ruined building; that he had ascended the spiral stairs; clambered, at the devil's suggestion, he supposed, and with evident peril to life and limb, to an old man of seventy, up to the

very highest attainable point of the edifice ; and had there ventured to look down, and become inexpressibly terrified at his height from the surface of the earth. While just awakening from his trance, his wife came in to summon him to a late supper ; missed off his head its usual covering ; hinted the fact to him ; and then, after passing his hand over his bald head, his pallid face turned into a dingy white colour, even more remarkable than was its wont ; his long jaws dropped, and became still more elongated ; and in utter consternation he now additionally recollected, and admitted to his spouse, that after having been so very much frightened in his dream, while looking downward from the top of the “ould castle,” he fancied he had hung upon its point nearest to the sky, the article in question. She laughed, and calling him to her assistance, peered everywhere through the little manufactory in which was her husband’s loom ; but no night cap could be found ;—and horrible to

add, very early the next morning, James Dullard, issuing forth with a next door neighbour, whom he had called up to afford him sympathy, and add to his courage in his projected investigation, discovered the missing head-gear—while, however, only looking up to the old castle, from their little street of cabins—perched on the exact place where James had but dreamt having put it; and he ought to know it well, although now seen at such a distance; for he had worn it day as well as night for the last ten or twelve years.

So, James Dullard had dreamt no dream at all. He must have put the night cap, where it was now visible, with his own hands, or (how the devil—God forgive us!) could it have got there?—or, again, how could he have ever known that it had got there, if he had not put it there, inasmuch as no one had ever told him it was to be seen there, before he went out with his neighbour, in consequence of his

abominable suspicion, and plainly saw it there ? The matter was a puzzle, and a very nervous one. He partially admitted the act to be his own, and he more than partially denied it. His bewildered mind did not know what to do. True he had heard of people who walk in their sleep, aye, and who even climb in their sleep ; but how could he climb, either awake or asleep, whose joints were so old and rusted that they scarcely served him to creep out from his loom, every day for about an hour to enjoy the fresh air, and particularly up to the very pinnacle of that dreaded old castle. The mystery became deeper and more fearful ; and so it continued up to the moment when Jeff Corrigan told the story.

He ceased, and there was again a pause of doubt and awe among the listeners ; and even Father Connell did not now laugh outright. He took it into his head, however, to go up and down amongst them all, sage men and boys as

they were, collecting their opinions as to how the thing could really have occurred; and when a most absurd and amusing mass of interpretations had been delivered, then indeed he enjoyed his hearty fit of laughter; informing them that, chancing to have been called out, to attend, on horseback, a remote country "call" (a summons from a dying person) upon the morning when James Dullard ventured out, in quest of his night-cap—sometime before James got up however,—he had himself seen Ned Roach's thievish pet jackdaw busily employed at the top of the old building, in placing, on the point where even at this instant it was visible to all observers, the old red night cap. And here Ned Roach, the shoe-maker, joined egotistically the priest's laugh at the feat of his jackdaw; and, the pressure of superstitious terror, in various shapes, removed off their spirits, great indeed was its echo throughout all the assembled guests.

A few other tales, as we have before hinted,

enlivened the circle, which we again aver we must postpone,—but not for a long time even from our present all-devouring reader. And songs now took up, as a finale, the entertainment of the evening; and many old Irish ones were pretty well given by some of the men of the choir; and “Crazy Jane,” and “Death and the Lady,” and “Begone dull care,” and so forth, were droned out by others of them. Father Connell himself, being called upon, tried to recollect the only song—we do not know what song—that he had learnt in his early youth, but after repeated failures in his own mind, and half irritated by his sense of the necessity of contributing to the mirth of his revellers, he suddenly broke out into a joyous Latin hymn, and as suddenly stopped short, grievously scandalized at himself; and then, to cover his confusion, he appealed to “his boys,” to help him out with “his portion of mirth;” upon which all of them became dumb and sheep-faced, except his old pet, Neddy Fennell,

who, when no one else would befriend his patron, in this urgency, nimbly stepped to the middle of the floor, and with the small portion of a "Biddy Doyle" in one hand, and a half finished mug of ale in the other, sang with much spirit and fun, if not with skill or science, "Billy O'Rourke was the boy for it—whoo!"

This little display affected his parish priest in a peculiar way. Perhaps it was the first time he had ever heard a song of such a character; but however that might be, the old man now looked amazed, and as if admiringly, on such a new proof of the cleverness of his young friend; and then, as the little fellow swayed his body and limbs, and frisked here and there, humouring the burden of his melody, Father Connell smiled and winked his eyes, and laughed, and wagged his head from side to side, and almost attempted to whistle, in unison with the unexpected talent and capers of the public performer before him; and when Neddy

had finished, he beckoned to him, took the pretty boy in his arms, kissed him, played with his auburn hair, made him promise over and over again to be a good boy, slid a shilling into his pocket, although at that time neither Neddy Fennell nor any of his family wanted such a donation; and finally, laying his hands on the urchin's shoulders, gently forced him down on his knees, to give him his blessing.

And Father Connell's *soirée* almost so ended. True, he topped the delight of all his juvenile guests by giving them each a silver sixpence, as a Christmas-box; and cordially gratified and made important in their own estimation, the seniors of "the choir," by very often shaking hands with them at parting, whilst every one received with bent heads and knees, their old pastor's blessing. But with little Neddy Fennell he lingered at his humble postern door when they were quite alone; again put his arms round him, again kissed him, while Neddy

thought he felt a warm tear drop on his sunny cheek; and again, and again, besought him to promise to be good, sighs of apprehensive doubt for the future—as we know them to have been — now and then interrupted the voice of the monitor.

And since our hero, Father Connell, has now proved himself so interested about the present and future welfare of Neddy Fennell, we may be allowed to give one back chapter, to the past situation of little Neddy, embracing, necessarily, incidents concerning his father and mother, which we believe will not be found uninteresting.

CHAPTER III.

NEDDY FENNELL's father, Atty, or Arthur Fennell, had been a glover in the only respectable street of the town, forming the city portion of Father Connell's extensive country parish. Atty, in his early youth, was a comely looking lad, single-hearted, simple-minded, yet wise and prudent; trustworthy, industrious, and skilful in his trade; sincerely punctual in his religious duties, and, for all the reasons suggested by this short description of him, respected and esteemed by his master, "Simon Bergin, the glover."

When Arthur was about seventeen, the only child of his master and mistress became apprenticed to a mantua-maker—for, although her parents were well to do in the world, and loved to excess their beautiful little pet, they would not bring her up in idleness. And indeed little Fanny Bergin deserved her father's and mother's love, as much on account of her rare beauty, as for her sweet disposition, shown in her constant soft smile, her gentle fairy voice, her obedience, and her general feminineness of character.

Fanny spent the day in the house of the person to whom she was apprenticed, returning however, to her father's roof for the night. To guard her, against all imaginable mishaps, whether from rude people, or from rude weather, Simon and Mrs. Bergin deemed that a competent escort was quite necessary on her return home in the evenings. To this office they appointed Atty Fennell, thus it would seem giving him beforehand a kind of intima-

tion of a fuller confidence, as regarded their darling and only child, to be hereafter placed in him. Atty well discharged his task. He would whisk with his cudgel—that cudgel which was ready to encounter a giant in her defence—the very straws from her path, in fine weather; and, if it rained, his instructions entitled him to bear Fanny home in his arms;—so that on wet and dark evenings he used to enter, with his light burden, into the little parlour, where her father and mother sat to the fire, his lantern swinging from the middle finger of his left hand, and the ostentatious cudgel tucked under his right arm.

Time rolled on, and it is needless to say, how all this ended. Every one will guess that in a few years after Arthur was out of his apprenticeship, and Fanny also unshackled from the bonds of her professional mistress, they were, after having been a long while before very sincerely in love with each other, married, to their own heart's content, as also to

the full gratification even of the parents of the almost over cared for little bride; as to the bridegroom's father and mother, no consent could have been asked of them, for they were dead, having left, however, in the hands of a careful trustee, a sum locally sufficient, and indeed considerable, to enable Atty to engage, when out of his apprenticeship, in any enterprise on his own account, with a befitting show of independence—a circumstance, by the way, which, highly and deservedly as Mr. and Mrs. Bergin valued the plain, honest, though rather simple character of Arthur, might have much assisted their final resolves for surrendering into his future protection the welfare and happiness of their little Fanny, with all her soft smiles, gentleness, clinging and dependent affection, and yet nearly weakness of disposition. Besides, their idol was not absolutely to be separated from them. Arthur Fennell and she were to continue to abide under their paternal roof; and thus, four people who loved

each other better than they loved all the world besides, would for many a long year form a delightful family circle—with perhaps the addition, in a few of those many happy years, of some little strangers, whose feelings would soon be interwoven into its web of domestic felicity.

So, the sun of hope, the brightest and the most unclouded sun that ever shone, or ever can shine on mortal creatures, blazed in absolute brilliancy upon the coming nuptials of poor Atty and his dear little Fanny Bergin. Yet, alas, big a liar as hope is, she never told bigger lies in all her life—that is to say, since the beginning of the world, with which, we do think she was born, purely for the purpose of keeping it delusively twirling on,—the old gratuitous cheat, never, we repeat, told a bigger lie than on the occasion of which we now speak. Her lies were not to be sure immediately found out; for years and years she “lied like truth,”—small praise to her, experienced

practitioner in her art, as she is; and—but let us not anticipate in this unskilful fashion.

Without a cloud, or the speck of one, in the sky of their seeming future lot, Atty and Fanny prepared for their marriage day; pure hearts, primitive minds, rational calculations, perfect love, and, if it be possible to say so of human beings in such a state of extatic anticipation, religious duties, above all other observances, presiding over their arrangements. Atty, in particular, was swayed on the momentous occasion, by his former pious habits. Regarding marriage as a sacrament, and a most solemn one, he disciplined himself, fitly to receive it, by previously approaching other sacraments of his church; those, namely, of Penance, and of the Eucharist. And if ever a man entered into the married state with devoted love for his wife, and at the same time with a holy sense of the sin of even slightly infringing upon the vow of fidelity to be

pledged to her at the altar, that man was Arthur Fennell.

He was married. For about two years the juggling prophet, we have rather bitterly spoken of, proved true; all was indeed happiness in the united families; but now came Hope's lie the first.—Old Simon Bergin died suddenly; his terrified and pining wife soon followed him to the grave; and thus ended the treacherous promise held out to them of the “many happy, happy long years” they were to enjoy with their children, and with their children's children. Again, however, so far as regarded Arthur, everything appeared perfectly to brighten up. His industry gained him great success in his trade; that success some little wealth of course, so that he grew into a respected citizen; and, unfortunately for his poor wife and only child, he at length deemed himself called on, that he might be enabled to supply the increasing demands made upon his

shop to engage a confidential journeyman, who was also to have considerable control over his accounts and receipts. A confidential journeyman!—a tall, spare-limbed, thin-lipped, solemn-faced, smooth-tongued hypocrite;—a canting, precise, cruel scoundrel and robber. Arthur, however, did not know this—out of his very nature could not know it; in his own estimation, therefore, he was growing richer and richer every day: and over all his worldly thriving and enjoyment, the star of love still and still twinkled brilliantly on; indeed, as a little instance of the undiminished affection existing now for a considerable period between him and his ever enchanting Fanny, poor Arthur would often send for her in the midst of his daily industry, to come a moment to speak with him; and when she had obeyed his summons, all he had to say was, “I only wanted to look at you, my darling;” and when, after mildly answering the fond glance of his eyes, Fanny withdrew, he would re-engage

with redoubled vigour, in his more important occupations.

Arthur became—and Hope's lie the second, and the most tremendous one of all she had ever uttered, at least to our unsuspecting friend, is now to be exposed. Arthur became a member of "the Charitable society" of his native city. This was an association composed of the respectable portion of the middle classes of his fellow townsmen, and established for the weekly relief of poor bed-ridden objects. To be elected a member of it, when three black beans could have excluded him, was a flattering proof of the rising estimation in which he was held; and Fanny and he often gloried over the circumstance in their fire side commentaries together; and they for some time wondered, and wondered upon what evening he might expect, according to the observances of the society, to be summoned as president at one of its weekly sittings. That proud evening came at last; and, after kissing his little wife

again and again, Arthur Fennell issued forth, dressed in his best, to assume his new dignity.

He took the chair; the business of the evening was precisely and soberly gone through;—the solemn little secretary closed his books;—and neighbourly enjoyment and good-fellowship became the order of the now merely social meeting. Hot tumblers of punch stood at the right hand of each member, and were now and then replenished; and the new president, although previously almost a “tee-totaller,” conceived himself called upon to patronize the usages of those around him. And jests, and good things, were cracked and uttered at every side, and anon certain marked individuals were cajoled into repeating oft-repeated, and often laughed at egotistical stories; in listening to which, though not half comprehending the suppressed ridicule chuckling in the breasts of the general company towards the narrators, Arthur Fennell laughed more vigorously than any one present.

For the secretary, a round little bundle of a

man, wanting three inches of five feet, and a school-master to boot, was decoyed into a description, which the wags of the society induced him to give, almost weekly, of several desperate naval engagements, in which he had performed wonders of valour. "Myself and another able-bodied seaman," he would very often say, "did so and so, or were engaged in such and such an achievement; at which, glancing at the "ableness" of his body, or else commenting upon the small bravado style in which he delivered the history of his exploits, the clever ones winked in keen enjoyment upon each other. In fact, the mendacious little man had, to their knowledge, never been to sea at all.

And another celebrated exaggerater, a shop-keeper, in "the main street," having once, upon a great urgency, absolutely journeyed to London, detailed in a very peculiar way some of the marvels he had there witnessed. Amongst other things, he was now coaxed into a repetition of his famous account of the manners of the

buffalo, seen at a menagerie. After describing, on a gigantic scale, the bodily proportions of this animal, he would proceed to imitate, fully to his own satisfaction, its various cries and bellowings; and—having been purposely placed by the side of some very young member of the club—and therein lay the cream of the jest—he would finally illustrate some of the buffalo's actions by suddenly seizing by the collar, with both his hands, his astounded neighbour, and butting with such ferocity into the breast and stomach of the man, while he still bellowed quite terrifically, that shouts of applause and laughter convulsed his audience.

There was a naturalist too, who gave a minute account of how Barnacles are engendered, out of pieces of old ship timber, found floating in the sea, to the sides of which any curious observer might find them clinging in myriads; and another close inspector of wonders who insisted that the sheet lead used by plumbers, was manufactured out of a “certain” kind

of sand ; and in fact many and many were the miraculous things which, intoxicated with the important novelty of his situation, as well as with a too frequent, though almost unconscious use of another stimulant, Arthur Fennell enjoyed, and sat out ; until finally even the most inured “ good fellows ” of the society began to prepare for going home, and as he tried demurely to wish them good night, and pass with a would be staid step out of the room ; they did not fail to remark, still for their own amusement, how flushed was the face, how meaningless the eye, how thick the utterance, and how drunken were the limbs, of the hitherto most particularly sober, and prudent, and respectable glover.

Although the club had dissolved at its very latest usual hour, it was still not late in the night, in fact, not eleven o'clock, and the night was a very beautiful one too. The moon shone bright and clear over one half of the streets, while it threw over the other half a

broad shadow, terminating at its edges in grotesque and exaggerated likenesses of jutting roofs, gables, and old and new fashioned chimneys and chimney-tops. No shop was open, and scarcely a light to be seen in the windows even of the private aristocratic houses of the little city; and not a human sound broke the stillness of the scene; for even at this early hour scarce a creature appeared abroad. But though human sounds were absent you could catch a few others: the flitting of the bat by your ears, the sharp bark of some stray or unhoused dog, the crisp chirping of crickets, as you passed close by a baker's shop door; with above all the rush and fall of the river, near at hand, over its weirs.

When Arthur Fennell, emerging from the lane in which were held the sittings of his club, gained the main street, it was, however, soon filled with human sounds, indeed—those, namely, of his own loud laughter, as, with his hat rakishly to one side of his hot head, he now

staggered along, quite abandoning, in the confirmed intoxication caused by the open air, his late attempts to look sober, control his swollen tongue, and walk properly. "And oh!" he would cry—"Oh, that able-bodied sayman! and Nick Magrath the buffalo man!" and he clapped his hands in very rapture, and still laughed out in roars. Turning the wrong way for going home, he arrived at the shambles of the town, before which stood some huge chopping-blocks, mounted on very long legs, and clambering up on one of these, he set his arms a kimbo, and danced heartily upon it to his own whistling. Suddenly, however, he recollected that he really was not on the true road homewards; and so he clambered down from the chopping-block, and gained the street again; and now his drunkenness changed into another mode. And thereupon Arthur became observantly and sagely drunk. The bright, quiet, moonlight, and the quaint terminations of the shadows produced by it, were noticed; and though he felt half inclined

again to laugh out at the fantastic shapes assumed by the edges of the latter, as they seemed to dance and intermingle before his eyes; still he was able to suppress the now unseemly impulse, and indulged on the whole in a grave contemplation of the wonders of nature and of art.

He arrived at the market-house or tholsel, and struck by its little pillars and arches, sat down a short time before it, fully to gratify his architectural tastes; and—"Yes," he cried, in his locally patriotic enthusiasm—"Yes, let let them look at that!—they may talk of their Dublins, and their Londons, and their ould Romes, and other foreign places—but let them look at that, I say—there it's for them—(hiccup)—there it's for them, before their eyes, to look at for a patthorn—(hiccup)—!"

He arose from his sitting posture on the cold stones, and wending still homewards, gained the middle of the bridge, beyond which he had to proceed but a few yards to his own

door. Here, in the moonlight views up and down the banks of the crystal stream, which the bridge spanned, Arthur had indeed subject for observation of the beautiful, in nature; and though but vaguely responding to its calls upon his notice, he yet stopped short to admire and mutter his admiration to himself. The unusual novelty of footsteps sounding through the silence around him, startled our friend, and he looked backward and forward; two women approached him, advancing from the centre of the town in the direction he had himself come.

Drunk as he was, Arthur immediately recognized these persons. They were sisters, living in his own street; the elder a widow, who even during the lifetime of her husband, had perhaps more than indicated to Arthur, though to his utter disgust, approval of his well-proportioned figure and handsome face; and she had not been otherwise, a woman of interesting character. But upon this unfortunate night, Arthur

forgot every thing unpleasant in her past life, only recollecting, for the first time with vanity, her former flattering attentions to him.

So, when the ladies stopped in a neighbourly way, to bid him good night, Arthur politely returned their salutation. They mentioned that they had been to a very pleasant evening party in the town, which was the cause of their being out so late. Arthur answered with a description of the happy evening he had himself passed, at the Charitable Society ; and accounts of the respect shown to him there, and of the able-bodied seaman, and of the buffalo man, and then of the beautiful pillars and arches of the Tholsel, followed ; and next came his reasons for suddenly stopping on the bridge, as he motioned up and down the river, speaking fast and thick ; at which his neighbour, the widow, replied in a poetical vein ; her hand resting on his arm, and Arthur, admiring that hand, and then its owner's face, in the moon-

light, thought and said, that both were very handsome;—and finally, at the lady's pressing invitation, he agreed to see her home to her door; and when they arrived at it, Arthur further agreed to step in and take a little bit of supper—a proposition to which his drunken stomach immediately yearned.

About four hours afterwards, he was rushing from that house, out of a fevered and hideous sleep! He ran wildly, and still staggering, though now not with intoxication, up and down his peaceful little street. His hands and his teeth were clenched, his lips apart, and frothy; his eyes distended, bloodshot, and fixed, and all his other features, haggard, and rigid. His dress was disordered too, and he was bare-headed, and he often fell on his knees, groaning miserably, tossing his hands, and beating his breast. In fact the heavy throes of remorse, shame, and despair, were upon him; consciousness of unpardonable sin,

of a breach of his marriage vow, and towards his own beloved, fond, and chaste-hearted wife. "Never, never can I again raise my face to her face," he resolved in his own heart and mind, "no, nor to the face of any human creature—I am a lost man—and something here," again striking his breast, "tells me that the life will not stay long in me, to be shameful to any one."

Becoming in the wretched quietness of despair, a little calmer, he walked to his own door, stealthily looking to either side, and before him, to ascertain if any chance passenger might be at hand to observe him; but he was still alone. He stood at the door, and raised his hand to its knocker, but turned from it again. Over and over, he came back, and over and over walked away from that hitherto happy threshold. At length, now very feeble, and with a deadly heart-beat, and leaning against the walls of the houses for support as

he came along, Arthur dared to knock; but so weakly, that those within could not have heard him. After a horrible pause he ventured to repeat the summons.

He heard a footstep inside, and bent down his head upon his outspread hands. The door opened, and his wife's old aunt appeared, holding a light. After one look at him, she started back. He staggered in, and without a word sank exhausted in a little parlour to one side of the entrance passage. The old woman followed him, greatly terrified.

"The Lord preserve us, Atty, my darling," she began, "what's the meaning of all this? and what has happened you?—Why, your very lips are as white as paper, and there is something like death in your face."

"Is there, aunt?—death!—I'm glad of that—and glad that you can see it so soon." He spoke hoarsely, and in gasps, while his hand was held tightly over his chest. "And there ought to be death in my face."

“ The Lord be good to us ! tell me, Atty, what has come over you ? ”

“ Is—is Fanny—is my—is she in bed ? ” he asked.

“ Och, yes, Arthur ; in bed these four hours, and more ; she was complaining a little, and I persuaded her to lie down.”

“ About four hours ago,” he repeated, and a low shuddering moan escaped him. “ Aunt Mary, will you make up the little bed in the back garret for me ? for I won’t lie down, this night, or this morning rather, in any other bed,—no, nor any other night, nor any other morning.”

“ Arthur Fennell ! tell me, I bid you—as Fanny’s nearest living relation, I bid you tell me all.”

“ Listen then,” and in a hoarse, croaking whisper, he did tell her all ; adding—

“ And so, aunt Mary, you now see that I can never again lay down my head on my pillow in my good wife’s bed ;—no, nor ever kiss her lips ;—no, nor ever put shame even on her

little hand, by taking it in mine, no ;—I am a traitor to her and to my God ; and the only thing I can hope to do, before the death, you saw in my face, relieves me, is to try, and pray to Him to have mercy upon my sinful, sinful soul.”

His old confidante heard the poor fellow’s admissions at first, certainly in anger, but quickly after in full compassion. She stared at him, and the expression of his face, manner, and actions seemed ominously to confirm his heart-uttered forebodings of—death. She trembled and wept profusely, and at length said—

“ No, my poor Arthur, no ; you must not quit your own old bed ; you are very sorry for what has happened ; and it is your first falling off ; and the God you ask forgiveness of, will forgive you ; and Fanny will forgive you too, and you are very ill ; so come up with me, I say.”

“ Indeed and I am sick, dear aunt, and want to lie down in a bed, but not in the bed you

“speak of; no, never, never; and as you, may be, think it a trouble to make up that little garret bed for me, I will try and make it up for myself.”

He half arose from the floor.

“Stop, Atty dear—the garret is damp, and the bed is damp, and you will do yourself harm.”

“Too good, too good, for one like me; give me the light, aunt.” He scrambled up to his feet.

The old woman was obliged to follow him with the candle, still weeping and shaking. At the bottom of the little stairs he slid off his shoes; and crept upwards, and particularly by the door of his wife’s bed-room, with the caution of a thief. The garret bed was arranged for him, and he wearily fell into it, hiding his face and head in its covering.

The afflicted attendant withdrew, with still streaming eyes, to her own place of rest, not able to make up her mind, at such an hour, to awaken her niece, and tell her what had hap-

pened. Fanny, about to get up, at her usual morning time, missed her husband, and perceived that he had not the previous night been in bed. Greatly alarmed, she quickly sought an explanation from her aunt. Still, all the poor old creature could force herself to say, was, that Arthur, on his late return home, had found himself ill, and lain down, in the garret bed.

Fanny flew up stairs. His head was still hidden under the bed-covering. She spoke to him, and was answered, only by broken-hearted moans. She gently withdrew the covering. She saw his collapsed, and indeed death-stricken features. His white lips moved rapidly, but, his sunken eyes were closed hard—he dared not, fulfilling his own fearful foreboding, look up at her. She peered closer, and there was blood about his mouth, and large blotches of it stained the sheets. She screamed, and threw herself by his side, beseeching him to say what ailed him, and offering every endearment of

affection, which, to her astonishment, were all refused; and then he muttered a few words: “No, no, no, my own darling—do not touch me—do not come near me—do not speak to me—I do not deserve it—but go down stairs, and say to aunt Mary that I bid her tell you everything that I told her.”

His wife soon acquired the necessary information; again ran up to his bed-side—“and is that all,” she said, smiling and crying together—“is that all, to make you turn your face from your wife, and your God, and lie down to die in this unwholesome garret? Arthur, it was not your fault—it was not your fault, Arthur, dear!—you were not master of yourself—and you were tempted, Arthur—come look up at me, Arthur—I forgive you from my heart—this very instant I forgive you!—only look up and smile, Arthur!”

But he only could answer—“I cannot, Fanny; I have sinned terribly against God

and you, and never, never am I to hold up my head again."

A fresh effusion of blood followed. Physicians were sent for. They advised quiet and repose—the very things unattainable by their patient. In a few days his heart again partially freed itself, by still another erring and wasteful flow of its vital fountain. The physicians now advised a visit with all speed, from his clergyman. Father Connell attended the summons. He found, indeed, a sincere penitent, hopeful of forgiveness in another life, but shudderingly shrinking from a continuance of existence in this world. The old man wept like a child at the sight of the dry-eyed anguish of the wife, as, before his departure she came in, at his wish, again to try her power in cheering and comforting; and he witnessed the first kiss, which, since poor Arthur's falling off, he could bring himself to receive from his wife's lips. Going down stairs, the priest was beset in his way by his little

chapel pet Neddy, who, crying bitterly, saw him to the street door. He squeezed the boy's hands tightly, over and over, and told him he would come back early next morning—it was now far in the night. He kept his promise. Neddy again met him at the door of the house.

“ Well, my child,” asked the old priest,—
“ and how is he to-day ?”

“ Dead, sir,” answered his favorite, flinging himself against the enquirer's knees.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Father Connell first undertook the care of the parish in which he ministered until he died, the whole code of penal laws, against Catholics, was in full force, and, according to one of them, no papist could impart literary instruction either privately or as teacher in a public school, without subjecting himself to fines and imprisonment. Yet, under hedges in bye ways, and in gravel pits, or in confidential, or in lonely suburb houses, contraband education was stealthily whispered to ignorant youth and childhood.

The predecessor of Father Connell had contrived to found and maintain, on a very humble scale indeed, in a cabin in the outskirts of the town in which he lived, an illicit seminary for the instruction of the poorer children of his flock, and by great exertion, and many stratagems, his successor endeavoured to follow up his example—though, indeed, by this time of day, much of the good man's precaution might have been spared:—for the unmerciful and wanton law, which doomed to helpless ignorance an entire population, had for many years been looked upon as too barbarous to be literally observed; so that—thanks to the self-asserting principle of justice in the general human bosom—even the very magistrates appointed to enforce the unholy statute, winked at the smuggling system of education which was going on almost under their eyes.

And something like better days now began to dawn on the efforts of Father Connell. In the year 1780 this law was repealed. Little

ragged papists could at last go to school openly and legally, and shout as shrilly as any of their Protestant contemporaries, when let loose from its threshold. Our priest therefore determined to erect, in the shabby straggling suburb in which was his own poor dwelling, an absolutely public school-house for the instruction of the children of the indigent.

The question however soon presented itself; where could funds be obtained to purchase even the materials for building the contemplated edifice?

In truth he did not know. Private means he had not; in fact, his daily extravagance in giving, often left himself a creditor for his dinner; so he pondered seriously for some time, until at length a happy thought struck him, and with a mixture of simple, and great glee of heart, and yet as great perseverance of head, he proceeded to carry it into effect.

Might not the poor urchins themselves be made contributors to the uprearing of a build-

ing to be appropriated to their own advantage? To be sure they might; and working his hands together, and smiling to himself in the solitude of his little parlour, he at once went to work on his project. He purchased for the poorest of his future scholars a great many wooden bowls; others of them, provided themselves with some such implement of industry; and in a short time, almost all the ragged little fellows in the parish might be seen running here and there, like a swarm of bees—not indeed in quest of honey, but of a few straggling stones, wherever they could be found; and when these were obtained, heaping them into their wooden bowls and other utensils, and then trotting with their acquisitions to a place appointed for the accumulation of a grand pile destined for the erection of their own parish poor school.

These small labourers had received strict injunctions to appropriate solely such stones as they should meet scattered along the roads.

and suburb streets, and which could not be called the property of any particular person. Yet it has been rumoured that when a scarcity of unclaimed material began to prevail amongst them, our zealous purveyors were not over nice in ascertaining whether this or that stone belonged to this or that individual; nay, we have it on authority that a good many infringements on private property were committed by them ; certainly without the knowledge of Father Connell, as we trust need not be stated. And it also became impossible that among the heterogeneous mass of stones, great and small, now rapidly swelling in bulk, the owners of the unlawfully abstracted portions of it could recognize any evidences of the theft perpetrated on his or her old wall or loose enclosure.

No matter; after some time the heap increased to a magnitude fully equal to the hopes and to the architectural plan and calculations of our good priest; and greater than ever was his glee on the occasion. It might indeed

have been whispered by shrewd commentators, that the great pyramid before which he now stood with admiring eyes, was not composed of stones of the best quality, or best suited to the purpose for which they had been intended; the greater part of them being in truth little better than pebbles. Other critics whispered that such as they were, they had cost Father Connell nearly, if not altogether as much as good square blocks from the quarry might have been purchased for; and indeed such was the fact.

But great had been his delight in observing from day to day, the questing excursions of his little stone-gatherers; there was, he argued to himself, industry, and therefore utility in the whole proceeding; and then the pigmy labourers seemed so brisk and happy at their task that their child-like, though not childish employer — for there is a mighty difference between these two epithets — fully entered into their feelings, and he and they became the

best friends in the world. And hence few of them ever went home of an evening empty-handed; a dinner or some pence rewarded the day's exertions; and from these circumstances very plausibly arose the conjecture, that apart altogether from the quality and fitness of his big heap of stones, the priest had even in a pecuniary point of view, no great bargain of it in the end.

Another heap of another description of building material was now necessary—namely one of sand, and for this the bowl bearers were also sent out to quest—and exuberant success again crowned their efforts;—although cunning judges still hinted that this acquisition, as well as the former one, had been bought dearly enough.

But however all this might be, what with well begged donations from every class of society within his reach, and contributions from his own pocket, whenever by chance he found a spare shilling in it, before twelve months since his first thought on the subject had elapsed

Father Connell's grand public school-house was erected, to the wonder and admiration of his Catholic parishioners, and to the unutterable grievance and abomination of some of his dissenting ones: the important object of interest on both sides being meantime nothing but a thatched house, though more substantial and better appointed as to the size and fashion of its two front windows, and its door and doorway, than the more reverend cabins with which it grouped, and containing only two apartments on the ground floor. If the critics on the occasion of the uprearing of this public edifice were at present alive, we wonder what they would say to the beautiful Catholic college now nearly finished at the aristocratic end of Father Connell's native city, and already inhabited by Popish ecclesiastical students, walking under handsome colonnades, in academic caps and gowns. Well—to say no more of the pretensions of Father Connell's parish school-house, there it was, and in

a short time a goodly throng of the future ragged men of Ireland were assembled in it; and it had been in existence twenty-five years at the time when we first introduced its founder to the reader's acquaintance.

The present teacher of the establishment had been a pupil in it from his infancy to his early youth; and as it was customary with our priest to select from amongst his scholars, the one most distinguished for learning and good conduct, to be promoted to the very desirable station of "priest's boy," Mick Dempsey became at about sixteen years the object of his priest's patronage in this respect; and after proving under his own roof, until the boy was a boy no longer, Mick's confirmed morality, and exemplary behaviour, the good man then pushed forward the humble fortunes of his late servant, by appointing him head teacher, master in fact, in the school house, in which he had so long been a pupil; king of the realm, where he had once been a subject.

And Mick was now a very well clad monarch indeed, within the very walls which well remembered his former tattered inferiority ; and we mention this pleasant progression of the young man's luck in the world that we may have an opportunity of relating a circumstance in connexion with his present new clothes, which took place between his patron and himself.

Every Thursday the parish priest and his curates used to attend, in their very humble little chapel, for the purpose of instructing the poor children of the parish, principally composed of the pupils of the school-house, in their catechism ; and, during Lent, every evening after vespers was devoted to the same purpose. The curates each taught a class ; but as the number requiring instruction was large, and made up of different ages and capacities, it became necessary that these clergymen should have lay assistants, who were also appointed by Father Connell ; and while the boys on the earthen floor of the chapel, and the girls on the

galleries, assembled in little groups, each group attending to its own instructor, the parish priest walked up and down, from place to place, now superintending the business of one class, and now of another. Amongst the lay teachers the master of the school-house held of course a superior rank; and, after his appointment to his new office Mick Dempsey fulfilled his duty in the chapel as faithfully, and as well, as his duty in the school.

For some time before the occurrence of the little scene we are about to describe, Mick had been attired indifferently enough; but on a certain evening in Lent, in the dimly lighted chapel, Father Connell having listened to, and observed, as usual, his catechism classes, one after the other, and reprehended or encouraged, as the case might call for, suddenly remarked a tall and exceedingly well dressed young man, in the centre of a circle grouped round him, very fitly discharging the office of teacher. The old clergyman stopped short and looked

hard at the young man, standing at some distance from him. "Who was he?" questioned Father Connell—"was he a stranger, or had he seen him before?"—he thought he had; yet the dress, and even the air of the individual (for new clothes, when a rarity, do alter for the better even the very mien of their wearer) seemed quite strange to him. The person's back was, however, at present, turned to our priest, and he longed to look into his face; but feeling that it might be an indelicacy in manners to go at once up to him and stare into his features, he walked down the chapel, as if quite unobservant, yet turning his head every now and then in curious criticism; and presently he made a wide circuit, that the object of his interest might not suppose he was rudely inspecting him; till, at length, by prudent management, he stood face to face before his own schoolmaster, Mick Dempsey. And now he opened his smiling blue eyes, and contracted his brows, and poked forward his head, from

its usual erect position, and drew it back again, and stood straight as ever, and smiled and smiled until his whole countenance lighted up—the degree of severe authority which he had thought necessary to assume in it, as befitting his character of inspector of the catechistical instruction, quite subsiding; until, finally, he nodded with undisguised delight, and almost with familiarity, to his quondam “boy,” now attired from head to foot in a “spick and span new suit” of elegant clothes.

But, anon, he bethought that the young observers around him might notice his raptures, strange and unaccountable to them, and that such an exhibition might not, in their eyes, be seemly for the place and the occasion; so he suddenly resumed his former austere bearing, and addressing his schoolmaster, said aloud—laying a particular stress on the first word, and using much courtesy of manner—“*Mister* Dempsey, I shall be glad to see you below in my house, when the teaching is over; and

don't fail to come, *Mister* Dempsey; I have something very particular to speak about, sir."

"I'll attend upon your Reverence," replied the well pleased, though puzzled *Mister* Dempsey; and more puzzled was he when the old priest moved the lids of one of his eyes into an action, which could not indeed be called that of a wink, for we doubt if he had been guilty of such a thing since his ordination—but still moved them in a fashion that very much resembled a wink; and then he turned away from Mick Dempsey, to pursue the routine of his business of the evening, still looking back however very often to the person who had so charmed him, and whenever their eyes met still nodding and smiling.

The evening's instructions terminated; *Mister* Dempsey followed Father Connell to his house, and found him anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"Mick, Mick, is that you? Is that you,

Mick?" began the priest, gently rubbing his hands within each other, and again smiling with peculiar pleasure, while he dropped the term *Mister*, which he had deemed fit to assume in the chapel.

"Indeed, and it is myself sure enough, sir," replied Mick.

"Upon my word, Mick, very good—very good indeed, Mick, upon my word,—turn round Mick, my good boy, till I can have a full view of you; very nice, very handsome indeed; and very good, Mick, I declare you *are* a good boy; I do declare you *are*—a very good boy;" and while thus addressing Mick Dempsey, he turned the young man round and round by the shoulders; now viewing him in front, now in the back, and now upwards and downwards, and in conclusion walking round about him, and clapping his hands softly together and laughing out right.

"And now, Mick," he continued, more seriously, after fully indulging his joy; "now,

Mick, I like that! It shows that you don't throw away your little savings; and isn't it a fine thing, Mick, for a good boy to buy elegant new clothes for himself, and look so decent and respectable in them, and not lay them out on whiskey, or cockfighting, or dancing houses, isn't it a fine thing, Mick?"

"Indeed, sir," answered Mick, somewhat astray as to the term, he should use in assenting to his own eulogy. "I think its a great deal better than to use them in the other ways you make mention of, sir."

"Sit down, Mick, sit down, my good boy—Peggy!" and here Father Connell cried out as loud as he could, and the burly person of his house-keeper appeared in the doorway of the parlour. "Come in, Peggy, and look at Mick Dempsey's new clothes, Peggy, ar'n't they very nice, Peggy? and all bought with his own earnings; ar'n't they very nice, Peggy?" and he again made Mick Dempsey revolve on his axis, for Mrs. Molloy's inspection, who with her

hands and arms thrust up to her elbows in her capacious pockets, critically analyzed her former fellow servant's outside, and then happening to be in something like good humour on the occasion, Mrs. Molloy pronounced Mick Dempsey to be a first rate beau.

“ Bring Mick Dempsey a drink of ale, Peggy,” continued Father Connell. “ ’Pon my word I think he deserves a little treat,” and Mrs. Molloy not demurring, a pewter vessel of ale was shortly placed before Mick, who drank from it to the health of his entertainer, and to that of Mrs. Molloy also; and here be it noticed that to a measure of good ale was limited all the libations in which our priest indulged his favourites, or himself.

Mrs. Molloy retired to her kitchen, and a silence of some moments ensued between Mick Dempsey and his patron, the latter steadfastly regarding Mick, though now evidently in a fit of abstraction, for his old eyes opened and shut very fast, and his well formed and handsome

old lips, although uttering no sound, tried to keep up with them. At length, his face unbending to its former glowing smile, he re-addressed Mick in a confidential whisper.

“Now, Mick, don’t you think that something handsome, and respectable, and a little like what gentlemen wear, would be very becoming, with the new clothes, Mick? a watch now, Mick, suppose a watch! don’t you think so, Mick?”

The schoolmaster shrewdly guessed to what the question might lead, but fiddling with the vessel from which he drank, he only assumed great innocence, and unconsciousness, as he said—

“I have no more money left, sir, and a watch would be too dear a thing for me at the present time, sir.”

“And yet for all that, Mick, the watch would show off the new clothes right well;—and so my good boy listen you to me. I told you before that I did not like to see young

men spending their money in public-houses, or dancing-houses, or such resorts; I believe in my heart, indeed I know well, that almost all the misfortunes that befall young people, are to be met with in places of the kind; but I do like, above all things, to see a young boy, or a young girl either, dressed well, ay, even a little above their station, Mick, because that shows that they have a respect for themselves; and self-respect, Mick, will surely obtain respect from others. And now, Mick, because I brought you up, and because I see that you are careful, and don't spend your money badly, and because I am sure that your good conduct gives good example, I will take on myself to bestow a token of my encouragement, and approval, where I think it is so well due. I'll give you the watch myself, Mick, to wear with your new clothes; and you may tell the people when you take it out of your fob to see the hour of the day, you may tell the people, Mick, that your poor priest made you a present of

that watch ; and you may tell them too all the reasons why he did so, just as you have now heard them from his own lips,—and when I am in my grave, and you show that watch as your priest's gift, it will do you no harm to be a little proud of it, and people may not think the worse of you for having deserved it."

As the old gentleman finished this earnest though simple address, tears trembled in his eyes, and while the person so complimented fumbled at some expression of his thanks, Father Connell put on his spectacles, and busied himself in writing a few lines, and when he had completed them, he folded the paper into the form of a letter, directed it, handed it to Mick Dempsey, and added—

" Take this to Tommy Boyle, Mick," meaning by Tommy Boyle, a wealthy and much respected inhabitant of the town, fully of the middle age of human beings, on whom, however he still continued to bestow the appellation, by which he used to address him a good

many years before, when that person was only a boy, “ take this to Tommy Boyle, Mick ; I have told him in it, to give you a watch, to wear with your new clothes, which he will charge to my account : ’tis not to be an expensive watch, Mick, because I have not much money to spare ; but I have told him to give you a watch to the value of four pounds ; and when he gives it to you, which I make no doubt he will do, wear it for my sake, Mick.”

The young man was sincerely thankful for this handsome gift, and now found words to express his feelings, promising that he would be careful of it in remembrance of the donor ; and the ale being despatched, and the priest wishing to be aloue, Mick Dempsey bent his head, to receive the old man’s blessing ; and early the next day, a flaming red ribbon, indicative of his watch, was seen streaming down the school-master’s right thigh, and he was often stopped in the street, but not too often to feel himself much annoyed at the circum-

stance, by humble persons requiring to know the hour of the day ; indeed he would very urbanely inform, upon that subject, any individual, man, woman, or child, who hinted, no matter how remotely, his or her anxiety about it.

CHAPTER V.

It was nearly a year after the death of Atty Fennell, that Father Connell paid a visit to his parish school. Christmas day was near at hand, and the weather horribly, and peculiarly cold, even for Ireland, in winter; that is to say, it snowed a great deal, or it rained a great deal, or to try and reconcile the two rival whims of the amiable atmosphere, it sleeted even more than it snowed, or even more than it rained; and after that, by way of jocose variety, it froze hard, for a few hours—following which the short-timed frost came down, as

we natives say, in pleasing rain again ; and all these things, it seemed happy to do over and over, while through every interesting change, it blew keenly, all the same from every quarter ; and the surface of the earth became upturned, and uprooted puddle ; and the clouds, instead of sailing above the earth, at a convenient distance, absolutely sunk down upon it, or rolled familiarly over, or along it ; and all places, and all vitality were humid, and shivering, and beyond human endurance, insufferable, and abominable, in the land we sincerely love best above all the lands we have yet seen in this wide world. It must pardon us, however, this one little demur against its climate.

Father Connell's business to the school-house, on the present occasion, was to superintend the distribution, amongst the most deserving of his pupils, of certain clothing which he had purchased for them ; indeed if we said the worst clad amongst the poor

creatures we should be nearer to the real motive that guided him in his selection of objects for his benefaction.

About fifty suits of clothes awaited his arrival in the school-house, some of one calibre, some of another, and some of another; in fact all selected to the best of his judgment, as available to boys of from about five to twelve or thirteen. They were of nearly uniform material; namely, a shirt, a felt hat, a grey frieze jacket and waistcoat, a pair of worsted stockings, and a pair of brogues, with the addition of a very peculiar pair of breeches, or small clothes, locally termed a "ma-a." And of course this word "ma-a," requires some passing explanation from us. It was, then, in the first place, bestowed on the portion of dress alluded to, as seeming to explain its pristine nature and quality, by imitating the bleat or sound uttered by the animal, from which the substance of the article had been abstracted. In good truth the "ma-a" was fabricated from a

sheep-skin, thrown into a pool of lime-water, and there left until its fleshy parts became corroded, and its wool of course separated from it;—and with very little other preparation, it was then taken out, dried in the sun, and stitched with scanty skill, in fashioning it, into something rudely resembling a pair of knee-breeches.

Such as it might have been, however, a “ma-a” was the general wear of the humbler classes in the district of which we now treat, and at a period considerably later than that with which we are concerned. Its manufacture engaged many hands, as the term is; but there is no such trade now; a “ma-a” alas, is not to be had for love or money. Let us, notwithstanding, before posterity loses sight of it for ever, be allowed a little longer, on our gossiping page, to hold up unto general admiration, this once celebrated piece of costume.

We are beside a standing, near the market house, in High Street, on a market day, and

upon it are exhibited “ma-as” of all sizes, from among which can be equally accommodated the peasant of six feet, and the urchin who dons his first masculine suit of clothes. Purchasers come up to the standing in turn: one experienced young peasant selects a “ma-a,” which, when drawn over his limbs, reaches nearly to his ancles, although eventually destined to button just beneath his knees, thereby making sage provision against the drying of the article after the next shower of rain—which would be sure to shrivel it up to half its primary dimensions; so that if he chose one, extending, in the first instance, only under his knees, he must shortly find it shrunk up to about the middle of his thigh. Another gigantic “country boy”, unacquainted with this collapsing propensity in the “ma-a,” which it is the interest of the vender, very often to conceal, chooses, on the contrary, the tightest fitting “ma-a” suited to his thew and sinew, to make himself look smart at mass next Sunday, as is mentioned by the seller; it does

indeed seem even rather too small—that which is so earnestly recommended to him; and to end all doubts on the matter, he and the trader adjourn from the standing, the debated article in the hands of the latter. We follow them across the street into a little, unfrequented, narrow lane, curious to observe their proceedings; and there we notice that, having persuaded the rustic would-be dandy to squeeze himself half way into the garment, the adroit “ma-a” vender gripes the article at both hips—himself being a very strong man, he tugs and tugs, with professional dexterity, lifting the half ashamed peasant off his feet, at every tug, until, at last, forcing the over strained small-clothes over the fellow’s huge limbs, and half buttoning it at the knees, he sends him blushing and smiling away, with a slap on the thigh that sounds like one bestowed on a well braced drum. But woe and treble woe to that skin-fitted and already straddling dupe! On his way home the rain falls in torrents—the sun

then shines out fiercely ; and by the time he arrives at his mother's door he is a laughing stock to her and his whole family. The dandy "ma-a" has coiled up more than midway along his thighs, very like damp towels tightly bound round them.

Antiquarians !—and all ye lovers of the worthless obsolete !—forgive this digression, for you will sympathize with it.

Honestly to resume. Fifty shirts, fifty little felt hats, fifty frieze coats and waistcoats, fifty pairs of the now (we trust) immortalised ma-as, and at least twenty-five pairs of stockings and broghes were heaped before Father Connell, in his school-house ; and many more than fifty poor little creatures assembled, upon the coldest day that came that year, each hoping to be chosen as a fit claimant, upon the bounty of his parish-priest.

On entering the school-room, the good man's compassion had been forcibly appealed to, as many of the almost naked children, ranged on the forms at either hand, turned up to his face

(while their little bodies cringed, and their teeth chattered) beseeching, and yet doubting eyes, whose lids fluttered, and could not for a moment meet his questioning regard. In fact he knew the meaning of these self doubting, mute appeals of the wretched urchins, and his primitive notions of justice battling with them, he was made unhappy. For in truth his keen glance discovered among the greater number of the wearers of the petitioning faces, individuals who were very irregular attendants in his school; whereas the Christmas clothing had been publicly notified to be intended for the most regular visitants of it, taking always into account the most generally deserving also; so that he plainly understood that a great portion of the present expectants were not, in point of strict school discipline, entitled to the promised periodical favours.

And this discovery, while it grieved, also puzzled Father Connell. Rigidly, and properly speaking, these young outlaws and street

idlers, who daily sinned against his constant admonitions, deserved no such reward. Yet how could he send out again, into the snow, which drifted upon a cutting north-east blast against the windows of the school-house, their little shivering carcasses? He turned his back upon them, looked out through the window at the weather, shook his head, prohibitory of the measure, while a few drops, too warm, and fresh from the heart for that weather or anything else to freeze, stole from his winking eyes. He quitted the window and walked up and down the school-room, pondering over the difficulty in his way. He sternly regarded the young vagabonds again and again; and, as if in answer to his every look, they cringed together, more and more piteously. What was to be done?—and he resumed his walk up and down the room; and finally stopped short again, nodded, but now approvingly to himself, and quite upright and austerely, went to Mick Dempsey and addressed him.

“Mister Dempsey,” for in this style already noticed, he always spoke to Mick, in the presence of his pupils; “Mister Dempsey, I’d be thankful if you call over the list of your regular scholars, and then let every boy who answers to his name, come down to this end of the school-room;” and he bowed and waved his hand to Mr. Dempsey, while pronouncing aloud his request.

Mr. Dempsey obeyed the command; and when the muster-roll had been gone through, more than twenty, alas, of unfortunate young scamps, not comprised in it, remained huddled together at the other end of the apartment, with what looks of bitter disappointment must be imagined.

The priest then took Mr. Dempsey by the arm, and led him into a corner, where their whispered conference could not be overheard.

“Mick, the poor children below are strangers to our school, ar’n’t they, Mick?”

“ I hardly ever saw them here before, sir, and now they only come to impose on your Reverence for the Christmas clothing.”

“ Mick, this is bitter weather, and the unfortunate little wretches have scarce a tatter to cover them against it, my good boy.”

“ But they have no right to get the clothes, sir, from our own regular boys.”

“ That is true ; very true, Mick ; and I know it is a bad example to encourage the idle to the loss of the industrious ; so that I believe to speak honestly and fairly, they ought to be turned out into the snow, without getting any clothes at all. But, Mick, they’d perish, they’d perish in this severe weather, they would indeed, poor little creatures, they’d perish, Mick ;” and he took the school-master’s hand and squeezed it, and shook it, and looked into his eyes appealingly, as if he would turn him from the rigid justice of the case, to its more merciful side.

“ It would be a cruel thing, Mick,” he continued, “ to send them out, to have the snow and the biting wind going through their naked bodies ?”

“ It would indeed, sir, but—”

The priest stopped him, before he could go beyond the admission he sought for; he did not want to hear the other side of the question at all. “ Well, well, Mick;—ay;” and he more emphatically squeezed the hand he held, while his old face grew bright again. “ I think I see how we are to manage it;” and now he whispered certain instructions into the school-master’s ear, holding his mouth very close to that organ, lest a breath of the purpose of his plan should be overheard.

“ Give me the cat-o’-nine-tails, sir,” he next said, in a loud and tyrannical voice; and having received into his hands the awful weapon, he walked with a lowering brow, and a more than ever erect person, towards the now terrified

candidates for attire, which they had not deserved.

“ You unfortunate little street trotting sinners,” he said, “ how dare you come here to attempt to impose on Mr. Dempsey and myself? you have never come here before, or very seldom at least; and you have spent the time, you ought to have spent here in idleness, and of course in sin; for don’t you know, that idleness is the father and mother of sin, and that sin destroys both the body and the soul? don’t you know all this, you little vagabonds? And yet like the drones of the bee-hive, you would now devour the honey without having helped to gather it in; yes—you now come here to ask for rewards that belong to more deserving boys; but I’ll give you your true reward; I’ll flog every one of you, one after the other, and that will keep you warm; every one of you.” Having delivered this oration in a tremendous voice, he flourished the cat-o’-

nine-tails above his head, and all the offenders, (all except one, who stood in suppressed glee on the threshold of the doorway, half observant, and wholly prepared to escape into the street the moment it might become urgently necessary ;) all the offenders emitted an anticipating yell of torture, and jumped up on the forms, or even on the desk, or knelt down, or rolled over each other on the dusty floor.

But the flourishing of the cat-o'-nine-tails was a signal agreed upon between Mick Dempsey and himself; and Mick, therefore, now advanced towards the seemingly enraged patron of the school.

“Come, Mr. Dempsey, have all these young cheats flogged one by one, for bad and idle boys, and for imposing on you and me.”

Louder than ever arose the despairing shrieks of the culprits.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said Mick, “but may be if you forgive them, they will be better boys for the future.”

“ Oh! we will, sir, we will—its we that will!” shouted the score of impostors.

“ I’m afraid there is little chance of that, Mr. Dempsey,” gloomily demurred the priest.

“ If his reverence forgives you, will you promise to be good boys for the time to come?”

A new and overpowering assent was given to the school-master’s proposition.

“ Well; if I thought they would mend, I might be prevailed upon to forgive them,” resumed Father Connell; “ but is there any one here to go bail for them?”

“ I will myself, sir; I’ll be their bail to you that they will be good boys and attend to their school, sir.”

“ Very good; very good, Mr. Dempsey;—do you hear what the master says, ye young sinners?”

The persons addressed, failed not to answer that they did hear very well indeed, and their former pledges of reformation were once more uttered in a great clamour; tones of hope and pleasure,

at their relief from the cat-o'-nine-tails, now cadencing, however, their voices; and their priest, interpreting the result only in the way, he had wished it to be, immediately rejoined—"very well, very well, then I forgive you for the present; and Mister Dempsey forgives you; and I hope God will forgive you; so now, come with me to the other end of the room; come my boys, come; come up here among the rest—there is more joy in heaven," he continued, as he approached the more deserving claimants for winter clothing, speaking in a loud voice, that they might hear him, and as solemnly, and sincerely as if he addressed an adult congregation off his little altar. "There is more joy in heaven for the repentance of one sinner, than for ninety-nine just."

And now he distributed equally among the righteous, and the unrighteous, as well as his judgment permitted, the pile of winter garments, "ma-a's" and all. One of the very last, who shyly lingered to claim his bounty,

was the boy whom we have mentioned, during the flourishing of the 'cat-o'-nine tails,' as standing upon the threshold of the school-room door,—prepared to escape into the street, in case of emergency. And, in truth, this little fellow was, perhaps, the very least entitled to share in the holiday donations, for, indeed, he had never before been in the priest's seminary at all; and yet he seemed to want, perhaps, more than any of the half-naked petitioners around him, some protection against the bad weather. Father Connell had personally inspected the donning of his little gifts, and now did the same towards the boy before him. While the little stranger put on his new dress, tears were seen to fall plentifully from his eyes, and he suddenly glanced up into Father Connell's face. The old priest started, seized his arm, and led him close to a window.

“What is your name, my child?”

“Neddy Fennell, sir.”

“Neddy Fennell! And are you the Neddy

Fennell that used to fix my surplice on me in the sacristy, and hurt my foot by treading on it?"

"I am indeed, sir, the same Neddy Fennell."

"Poor child! how changed you are then. God bless me! and I was wondering what had become of yourself and your mother, and your poor aunt!—after your poor father died, you know, I often went to see ye all, Neddy; but then came my absence from the parish, on business, for a long while; and then the bad fever, that left me weakly, within the house, for a longer time still; and it was only the other day I could creep out to ask after you, when I missed you out of the choir: and then your mother's house was shut up, and no one could tell me where you had all gone,—only that great poverty had overtaken ye; and is this true, Neddy? And are ye so very poor, Neddy?"

"We are indeed very, very poor, sir."

“ God bless me ; poor child, poor child ; and where does your mother live now, Neddy Fennell ? ”

“ In a cabin on the green, sir. ”

“ Well, Neddy, well ; you’ll show me where your mother lives, and I will go see her with you ; wait for me until the boys go home by the bosheen, and go there you with them ; but don’t go home with them—don’t go any where without me ; poor child, poor child—I must see your poor mother. Now Mick,” continued the priest, again whispering the school-master confidentially, “ the snow-storm is nearly over, and I will go into the bosheen, where no one can oversee or overhear us,—and I will wait at the churchyard gate, till you come up to me with the boys. ”

And in a few minutes the old gentleman occupied his post where he had mentioned it as situated—at the little gate of the churchyard of his chapel ; and half secreted between

its piers he now stood. "The Bosheen,"—a solitary, and unfrequented green lane, running to his right, and to his left.

For a few minutes he waited here, smiling to himself, and clawing the palms of his hands with his fingers; and anon, his ears were gratified by the expected sound of a great many little feet, softly tramping through the yet thin layer of snow, in the bosheen; and in a few seconds more, appeared Mick Dempsey heading his army of newly-clad pupils, who coming on in great order, only two abreast, formed a goodly column. They slowly defiled before their priest and patron, each as he came up, squeezing hard, betwixt his finger and thumb, the narrow brim of his little felt hat, chucking it downwards, and the head it contained along with it; and then abruptly letting go, that both might bob back again, to their usual position, and so altogether performing a bow to his reverence. And for every bow he got, every single one, Father Connell gave

another bow, performed with studied suavity, though his face all the while glittered; and when the troop had quite passed by, he stooped forward, leaning his hands on his knees, to peep after them; and again standing upright, he clapped those hands softly together, and laughed, almost shouted forth his delight, while not tears alone, but little streamlets of tears, of happy, happy, tears trickled down his bloomy old cheeks.

It was some time before his outbreak of enjoyment permitted Father Connell's mind to recur to his engagement, with Neddy Fennell; but now suddenly starting, he looked about him for his young friend; saw the boy standing timidly and alone, at a little distance, walked hastily to him, seized him by the hand, and under his guidance went to visit the widow of poor Atty Fennell.

CHAPTER VI.

“THE Green,” so called by Neddy Fennell, had not a bit of green about it, being a space, enclosed at three sides, by wretched cabins, and at the fourth side by the high wall of the county hospital, within which that sedate edifice stood. The cabins were tenanted by the poorest of the poor. Their thatch half rotten, and falling in; with holes in their clay walls for windows, and holes in their roofs for smoke vents; and if ever the semblance of a chimney rose above one of them, it was contrived of a kind of osier work, plastered with mud. Upon

the area of the ground thus hemmed in, presided disorder, and want of cleanliness, in many inert varieties: heaps of manure before each door, and everywhere about, carefully collected by the inhabitants, as their most considerable source of wealth; little pools of dirty water, and puddle in all weathers; stones, great and small, wherever they could find room; while through these pleasing resorts pigs grunted and wallowed, vicious cur dogs barked, and gambolled, or else snarled and quarrelled, and bit each other; miserable half starved cocks and hens stalked here and there, in quest of something to pick up, and found nothing; and half naked, and sometimes wholly naked, children ran, shouting, and playing, and enjoying themselves.

Fronting the hospital gate, but nearer to the opposite side of the irregular square, the gallows destined for the reception of city malefactors of the highest degree, used, occasionally—yet, we are bound to say, very seldom,

recollecting the mass of squalid poverty around it—to be erected; and this was one feature of notoriety for the green, from which it improved on Neddy Fennell's appellation, and was more emphatically termed Gallows Green. But there was also another trait of its celebrity, now to be indicated.

It had, time immemorial, been a kind of city corporate commonage. Everything with and without life might take possession of it; no questions asked; and the liberal indulgence was not long unacknowledged. When the hospital was being built sand had been scooped irregularly, here and there, from beneath the surface of the green, nearest to the edifice's site, so that, after its completion, and the erection of its boundary wall, hollows remained. Upon the verge of one of those, or haply at its bottom, some speculating, vagabond pauper experimentally ventured to erect a hovel, still more wretched than the buildings enclosing three sides of the space around it. How he

procured the materials, even for such a dwelling, Heaven and he know—not we. No one interrupted his proceedings, and he lived for years, rent free, and tax free ; and in every way luxuriantly free, in his new house. His success emboldened others like himself to imitate his example ; and in a few years, copies of his domicile, perhaps to the amount of one hundred or of one hundred and fifty, were to be seen on the edges, or on the sinking sides, or in the very depths of the old gravel pits, and the population of the precious colony soon became very numerous.

To get into this jumble of miserable dwellings was a puzzle ; to get out of it, once in, a still greater one ; for it contained no streets, no lanes, no alleys, no enclosed spots, no straight ways, no level ways ; but hovel turned its back upon hovel, or its side, or its gable, or stood upon the verge of an excavation, or upon the declivity, or at the bottom of one, as before hinted ; so that a stranger venturing

into the settlements in quest of any one or any thing, could not know where he was going, or where to go, unless conducted by the hand of an initiated resident ; as to escaping into the green again, without some such friendly agency, the thing was romantically out of the question ; and if he were at all a broad shouldered man he must have squeezed his way through almost every random opening available for his progress. In truth, compared with the difficulties of this labyrinth the enigma of “ The walls of Troy,” inscribed by urchins on their slates at school, was a mere nothing ; and in our Charitable Society, from which the week’s president was sometimes deputed to pay the locality a visit, it became jocosely fabled that a shower of houses had fallen,—no time specified—from the clouds, upon this inhabited portion of Gallows Green, tumbling here and there, helter skelter, and so remaining to the period we speak of. And “ the shower of houses” became a distinguishing title of the *quartier*.

A word as to the probable nature of the characters inhabiting "The shower of houses." At the first glance we recognize them as a set of unhappy creatures, all living, in one way or another, by chance. At the second it is admitted that many among them were composed of individuals so modest as to retire occasionally from the notice of the mayor, magistrates, constables, and other nice critics of the adjacent city and suburbs; for once within the sanctuary of the shower of houses, a person of seclusive habits might sequester himself for any given time; the approach of an uninvited visitor spreading from house to house with telegraphic despatch, and the object of such a visit being helped at every hand to lie secret, or to escape; while it would have taken a *cordon militaire*, shoulder to shoulder, round about the colony, to prevent the egress of any one in it; as to catching amid its subtleties that "any one," you might as well—to use the boastful language of the natives themselves,

you might as well “look for a needle in a bundle of straw.”

It will of course be borne in mind, that we have sketched a place in existence about thirty-five years ago. “The green,” is at present very much improved. Some years since, its civic proprietors established a right of doing what they liked with its little Alsatia; from which circumstance, resulted the fact, that the shower of houses vanished from the face of the earth; and—but we cannot indeed loiter to point out any of the other changes for the better, now visible upon Gallows Green.

Neddy Fennell stopped his patron before the habitation they had come to seek—one of a piece with all those around it. As Father Connell stood at its threshold, his hat touched the eave of its roof of rotten thatch. Its clay-built walls were mouldering; its foundations crumbling away; there was not a good promise held forth by its whole appearance that it could adhere together for half an hour. To

one side of its clumsily patched door was a badly shaped oval hole, the only vent through which, excepting the open door-way, the smoke from within could in mild weather get out, or the light, and the miasmatic vapour floating abroad, and called fresh air, get in. But in the piercing cold, and pelting storms of the season at present, this hole was stopped with a mysterious bundle of old rags and straw, and the curiously contrived old door also shut.

The initiated Neddy Fennell raised its latch by tugging at a knotted string. Father Connell entered the dwelling, bending almost double in order to do so. He stood in the middle of a puddled earthen floor, upon which the thawing snow from above, oozing through the decayed or partially open thatch dripped and splashed, not, however, without becoming tinted in its descent by the depositions of soot formed, time out of mind, upon the therefore blackened sticks that very infirmly supported the roof of the edifice, staining every thing it

fell upon into a dingy brown, and hence termed "soot rain." The walls around him were bare clay, as bare as their outsides, excepting the fact of their being japanned with smoke.

The length of the hut, from end to end, might be about twelve feet. Quite along this extent ran a mud partition, not, however, reaching to the roof, and enclosing an inner apartment some two short paces in breadth, a doorless blank orifice in the dividing screen affording entrance into it. Against the gable, to our priest's right as he entered, a very little grate was contrived, ingeniously fixed in yellow clay hobs, and fashioned out of pieces of old iron hoops, obtained we cannot venture to affirm how, or where; and in this grate burned, or rather brightly glowed a brisk fire—glowed we say, because the little balls of mixed clay and ashes composing its materials emitted no flame, but went on igniting like a kiln; not failing, however, to spread through the shut

up apartment—unsupplied of course with a chimney, a sulphurous, and otherwise choaking vapour, which made any strange visitor cough and sneeze, much against his will.

Before the ardent little fire, and almost touching it, squatted a middle aged woman, dressed in rags and tatters; cooking upon a “griddle,” (a round flat piece of iron,) a cake which occupied the full space of her apparatus; and curious to relate, she was so happy in her den of seeming wretchedness, that she endeavoured to shape her cracked voice into what was intended for a merry song.

Catching the sound made by the old squeaking door as Father Connell came in, the woman stopped short in her melody, though not in her cooking process; and without turning or looking behind her, jocularly shouted out—

“Ah, then, the divil welcome you, honey, and is that yourself?”

A step or two brought Father Connell close

upon her. These steps did not sound like those she had expected to hear. She glanced sideways at the feet and legs which now almost came in contact with her own. The friend she had counted on, and for whom her salutation was intended, certainly did not wear black knee-breeches, and large silver buckles in her shoes. She looked quite up, and recognized the formidable hat and wig of her parish priest; and then, with surprising agility, up she bounced from her squatting position, retreated as far as the dimensions of her dwelling would permit, and there clasping her hands, gazed in terror at the old clergyman.

“ I fear the word that is on your lips is in your heart,” he said sternly, “ sinful woman.”

“ Och, then, may the word choke me if—”

“ Stop!—or I fear you may get your prayer; I fear you will die with that very word in your mouth.”

“ I won’t—I won’t, your rivirince!—I’ll die a good Christian.”

“ Well, well—God mend you—God mend you,” and Father Connell passed into the inner chamber of her house.

Here, not able to see distinctly any object, he called at the orifice, through which he had squeezed himself, for a light; the woman without came with some burning straw in her hand, which only flared for an instant, and then left him in redoubled darkness. He asked for a candle, and unable to produce such a luxury herself, the dame tucked up her tatters and left the wigwam to hunt, as she said, “ among the good neighbours for a scrap of one:” during which hunt she did not fail to telegraph through the shower of houses, that their most dreaded enemy, their parish priest, was among them.

She came back, however, with something like the article for which she had issued forth; by the aid of which her visitor now discerned two female figures stretched upon loose and damp straw, shaken into two separate beds, as

it were, over the puddled earthen floor; while their bodies were covered with some indefinable patch work of shreds and rags, and while the roof over them now and then sent down heavy drops; and one of these women was the widow Fennell, and the other her aunt Mary. The old priest's blood ran cold; his heart wept within him; but he tried to keep down his feelings. Obtaining an old three-legged stool from the next apartment, he sat down on it at the head of the miserable couch now occupied by the once idolized pet of a comfortable home: took her little bony hand and listened to her sad tale of explanation.

“After her husband's death,” she said, “everything went wrong with her; “she was no good,” continued her little, feeble, murmuring voice: “she could only mope, cry, and fret all the live-long day; and the wicked journeyman that Arthur Fennell left behind him, in his shop—God forgive her if she wronged him!—turned out to be a very bad man, making his own of

the profits of her trade, and giving her no accounts; and debts for stock laid in were asked for, and there was nothing to pay them; and workmens' wages too were asked for, every week; and as long as she could she tried to satisfy these demands, bit by bit, out of a little store of money, which Arthur had saved; and at last, when she had not another penny to give, real poverty came upon her and her aunt; the interest of her house, her furniture, all was sold and swept away; and her aunt and she sank lower and lower, changing from one poor lodging to another, until, at last, they were obliged to seek refuge in the place where Father Connell now found them. "We have very little to live on this time back, sir—very little indeed; nothing but what we are allowed weekly by the good members of the Charitable Society, as the widows of tradesmen—as much as they can give, sir, but still very little between my aunt, and the little boy and myself; and out of it we must pay two shillings a week, for

the corners we are lying in, and the rest barely keeps the life in us; and—whisper sir—the old woman and I, poor as our food is, stint ourselves that we may give Neddy something like enough to ate. And oh! Father Connell, this kind of bed I lie on is worse to me than it would be to people always accustomed to such poverty, and to my poor aunt Mary too: indeed and indeed, sir, the cold of the flure numbs me, and I feel very, very chilly and miserable, day and night—shivering all over, and never warm as I used to be formerly; and then the ould covering over our bodies is very thin; and the rain often drips down on us, so that my very bones get sore, and I have no rest; and whichever way I turn, is all the same, sir.”

Here the widow Fennell moved herself on her straw. Part of her squalid coverlid fell off her shoulders: and Father Connell saw that her body was quite naked. He started up from the three legged stool, paced to the second couch occupied by her aunt, and ascer-

tained that the aged woman was in the same condition. Acting upon an impulse, but one which before now he had often fully obeyed, when the sex of the poor object permitted, Father Connell walked quickly to a remote nook of the comparatively long slip of dungeon, and was preparing, without observation as he thought, to disrobe himself of his very inner garment, when, glancing behind him, he was suddenly put in mind that he must not, at present, follow up his purpose. He next thrust his hands into all his large pockets, and finding nothing in them, strode up and down, moaning dismally. And, at length, forming a resolution, he alertly issued into the outer apartment—not, however, without taking the poor young widow's hand again, squeezing it hard and whispering to her—"I'm going from you, my child, but I won't be long away ; rest you here as quietly as you can till I come back."

"Where are you, Neddy?" he called out :

the boy ran to him from one of the hobs of the densely glowing little fire; “give me your hand, Neddy, and lead me out of this sinful place, as you led me into it; and, after that, come home with me; yes, Neddy, my poor little boy, come home with me; but we will come back soon again to your mother—we will indeed, Neddy—indeed we will.”

CHAPTER VII.

IN quitting the abode, holding fast by Neddy Fennell's hand, Father Connell had no eyes for any thing around him. He did not therefore perceive, that the woman he had first seen cooking her griddle cake, was now sitting on her heels at the fire, along with another woman, habited very like herself ; the friendly visitor, in fact, for whom she had mistaken Father Connell on his coming in ; and who, during his conference with Mrs. Fennell, had really returned to her co-partner, in a certain traffic, her body bent under a little sack, se-

cured thereon by a hay rope passing across her forehead.

Upon the meeting of the two friends, a subdued "whist!"—and nodding and winking towards the inner room, on the part of the cook, and then, whispering explanations at the fire, enabled them to sit quietly until the priest passed out—not, however, without disagreeable apprehensions of what might be his notice of them before he left their house. But he did leave it, paying no attention to them; and then, after a cautious pause to give him time to get far enough away, they ventured to indulge a few sneers and jests, at his expence; turning by and by to other topics.

The two persons before us were, what is locally called "potatoe beggars;" it should be added, potatoe sellers too, as they certainly vended to good advantage, the food received as alms. Amongst the farmers' wives, whom in pursuit of their calling, they very often

visited, one of them was in the habit of admitting that she "*went by the name*" of Nelly Carty, and the other by that of Bridget Mulrooney; and both used to tell pathetic stories of their large families of orphans, and how they were left alone in the wide world, without a "mankind, to do a hand's turn for them on the flure," or to earn as much as a cold potatoe for themselves and their starving children. Co-partners in trade, it has been said they were; joint owners of their crumbling hut, they also were, and every article of its furniture had two mistresses; and in all the hardships of business, as well as in all its profits, they had share and share alike.

Perhaps the majority of the colonists of the shower of houses, living upon chance, as we have intimated, were made up of potatoe beggars; as well, indeed, as were a good portion of the occupiers of all the miserable suburbs at that time surrounding our city; yet, none of them seemed dissatisfied with their social

position; and, in fact, compared with the less brazen-faced paupers around them, who were ashamed to beg, little reason had these sturdy vagabonds to be so. If famine did not reign over the land, in consequence of the destruction, by an unfavorable season, of the potatoe root, "there was little fear o' them," as they said themselves; and a passing notice of the manner in which Nelly Carty, and Bridget Mulrooney drove their thriving trade, may prove the assertion, as regards the whole of their numerous and respectable body.

At break of day in winter, and at six o'clock during every other portion of the year, out sallied either one or the other of them; her well patched bag of indefinite material chucked under her arm, leaving her helpmate at home, to take care of the house, and perform other necessary duties of the firm. And suppose, Nelly Carty went out, Bridget Mulrooney had, compared with Nelly's responsibilities, a day of exquisite rest,—and hence, by the way,

arose the necessity of the extensive association of potatoe-beggars following their vocation, in couples at least, if not in trios, or quartettos. So, Nelly went out, and after clearing the town and its environs, traversed a pretty wide district, in mud and in mire, in sunshine and in all its contraries, hail, rain, snow, frost, fog, wind and tempest, and so forth; along high roads, and bye roads, along *bosheens* and field paths; over hedge and ditch, over hill and valley, until at last she succeeded in amassing in her sack, a creditable load, amounting to about one hundred weight, gained by most plausible beggary from all the well known farm-houses in her chosen haunt; and also very often from the cabins of the working peasants encountered on her way.

But Nelly was not such a fool as to carry her bag from door to door with any appearance of plenty in it. So soon as it began to assume a plethoric shape, she knew well some convenient spot in the open fields in which to

deposit its contents ; after which, she could bear it quite empty and open-mouthed, and beseechingly to the thresholds next to be visited ; and before evening fell, after receiving the “ bit and sup,” along with her usual donation of raw potatoes, at more than one of the truly charitable dwellings among which she quested, Nelly recurred with the certainty of a raven, to the hiding hole glanced at ; secured the mouth of her now well distended wallet ; passed a rope of hemp, or of hay over its middle, when she had poised it between her shoulders ; repassed the rope across her forehead ; then gained by the shortest cut, a place of rendezvous on the high road, where she met perhaps a dozen of her sisterhood, though by no means in partnership with her, who there had sat down to rest a little while, after the happy termination of their day’s ingenuity ; rested, and smoked, and gossiped, merrily and loudly along with them ; in their company walked home, bent double,

though on sturdy bare red legs and feet ; gained the rent free, and tax free dwelling of which she and Bridget Mulrooney were joint proprietors ; entered it, and found Bridget prepared to afford her in every way a luxurious welcoming, after her tramp of at least fifteen long Irish miles ; relieved herself, with her helpmate's joyous aid, of her formidable fardel, and sat down at the brisk little fire to become very happy. And the next morning Bridget Mulrooney went out with the bag, of course, and Nelly staid at home to enjoy *her* day of repose ; and so, day after day the year round, the business of their concern was regularly carried on.

The shower of houses has passed away ; not a trace even of the foundations—if ever they had any, of its hundred and fifty wigwams can be seen ; but potatoe-begging has thereby suffered nought, either in popular estimation, or in the numbers of its professors. To this very hour, towards the close of the

day, detachments of the amiable sisterhood homeward bound, and generally proceeding in single file, while they all gabble and laugh, and gibe, and shout, to each other, from front to rear, may be encountered upon every high road diverging from their native town. There is one of those roads, by the way, along which the good ladies do not trudge in very high spirits, but rather with clouded brows, scowling eyes, and muttering voices, and that one is the road to the left hand side, of which, just as it is about to join Gallow's Green, a certain building now begins, with every promise of being soon finished, to erect its austere looking front—the district poorhouse in fact.

But Bridget and Nelly are still before us, at their fire, provokingly inviting us to turn from a general notice of them to something more individual and domestic ; and it was Bridget Mulrooney who had been out that day with the bag.

When they became quite assured that the

priest was beyond hearing or observation. Nelly recurred to her griddle cake, which, during his retreat into the inner apartment, she had not forgotten to take care of, and now found it done "to a turn," and to her heart's full satisfaction, as it exhibited on both sides the proper speckled surface of brown and white, which demonstrated her culinary success. She removed it from the griddle, cut it up into measured portions, and placed these on edge round the hob, to keep them still comfortably hot. She then put a short form in front of the smirking fire; and using a rickety old chair as a sideboard, deposited upon it her odd cups and saucers, as she called them—and indeed "odd" they were in every sense of the word, of different sizes, patterns and colours; by their sides, or among them, one leaden teaspoon, a little jug with a broken nose, three white delft plates with blue edges, a wooden "noggin" a little black tin teapot, and a wooden-hafted knife. This done, she drew

out of one of her capacious pockets a flat bottle, containing whiskey, which, when used as on the present occasion, is jocularly termed "colliery crame;" again from the same ample receptacle a small folded paper, holding one quarter of an ounce of tea, and after it a second parcel somewhat larger, enveloping two ounces of intensely brown sugar. During her proceedings so far, a small three legged metal pot had been boiling away gloriously, after the removal of the cake and the griddle, on the fire; with the aid of the wooden noggin she now abstracted from this pot, water to make her tea in the little dingy tin tea-pot; and, still continuing her allotted household duties, split the different portions of her cake with the wooden hafted knife, and then heaped butter upon the insides of each portion until the dainty was saturated through and through.

Pending these preparations, Bridget Mulroney, squatted on the floor, at one end of the short form, looked on at Nelly's process,

with very pleasing anticipations, and asking a careless question, now and then, and uninterruptedly extending the palms of her red hands and the soles of her red feet so closely to the fire as, by nice and habitual calculation, barely to avoid the uncomfortable result of having them blistered, enjoyed, it may be boldly affirmed, a position and situation of great bliss. Her day of labour was over; she was deliciously resting herself; she had not to stir in the performance of any household duty; abundant and cheering refreshment was close at hand; and she was not to go on the tramp for one whole day again—what earthly lot could surpass hers? Ask a queen!

Everything being in readiness, Nelly Carty also squatted herself at the end of the form opposite to which Bridget Mulrooney sat. The pair rubbed their hands in gleeish anticipation; and the pig, nestled in his corner, thrust out his snout from his straw, regarded his mistresses, and good humouredly grunted his satisfaction

at seeing them so comfortable, and so near the point of perfect enjoyment.

Our hostess of the evening poured out the scalding hot tea, sweetening it well with the thoroughly brown sugar, and more than once sipping with the little leaden spoon from both the cups before her, to ascertain, as in duty and etiquette bound, the quality of the beverage, according to the judgment of her own palate. She next infused into each cup no stingy portion of the "colliery crame," which, as it gurgled through the neck and mouth of the flat bottle, so tickled the ears of both ladies as to produce a pleasant chuckle. And again the smiling Hebe of the feast stirred the compound mixture with her little leaden spoon, again took a sip out of each cup, wagged her head in approval of the final fitness of the beverage; and handing over one measure of it to her helpmate Bridget, cried out in a tone of utter joviality—

“ Here, my ould Duchess--will that lie in your way we wondher?”

“ That’s nate tay sure enough, Nelly,” after swallowing a mouthful so hot and so pungent that it obliged her to close her eyes during its descent through her throat— “ but I think yourself is as much of an ould Duchess as I am, Nelly?”

“ ‘Faith we’re a pair of ould Duchesses, Bridget, and much good may it do us, I say.”

“ There’s them is worse off, Nelly, wid our good tay and our butthered cake.”

“ Well, well Bridget, alanah machree, if you were lookin’ at me to-day evenin’ when the ould priest came in! By this same blessed tay, I thought the ground would open and swally me. Sure I thought that t’was your four bones that lifted the latch; and, so, what does I do, but sings out ‘divil welcome you, honey,’ to the face iv his big wig.”

“ Oh-a, oh-a ! and what did he say to you, Nelly ? ”

“ He has no good will to me of ould— and he tould me I’d die with that word in my mouth—but I won’t—I’ll die a good christian yet, Bridget, as I tould him.”

“ And we’ll all do that Nelly, and why not ? ”

“ If there’s anything comes across you, Bridget, the grass won’t grow under my feet, till I hunt out the priest for you, and bring him to the bedside to you—and, by coorse, you’ll do the like for me, Bridget ? ”

“ By coorse, Nelly, by coorse ; but tell me what’s the rason that Father Connell would have an ould grudge against you, Nelly ? ”

“ Faix, and that you’ll know afore long, my jewel, if Nelly Carty’s tongue dosn’t get the palsy in it.”

“ Och, there’s little dhread ov that, Nelly.”

“ Divil a fear, my ould duchess, but wait a bit ob you plase — *Go skurra dhuch naa skaol* goes

one way, but I say, no story widout the supper."

A second cup of tea, precisely manufactured as its predecessor had been, was served out, and Nelly continued.

"I b'lieve its ten years agone sense you an' I kem together, Bridget. I lived on the Lake at that time, an' Father Connell has a mortil hathred to the Lake; and I was livin' under the wan roof with Tim Donohar—you know Tim Donohar, Bridget?"

"No, I never stopped on the Lake, Nelly, and so I had'nt a knowledge ov him."

"He goes by the name of Woodbine."

"Woodbine, enagh! And what do they call him by that name for, Nelly?"

"He has wan good leg, Bridget, but the other is'nt the fellow iv it; and he carries a critch at the side where the odd leg hangs; and if you war to see that leg!—it twists round the critch, wan or two times, afther the manner iv the woodbine that grows in the hedges:

and for the same raison they calls him Woodbine."

"He, he, he! divil a betther."

"Well, my ould hare, I lived under the one roof wid Woodbine, at the time I'm goin' to tell about; and Tim and the whole of us liked a bit of mate well enough; so, myself was out in the direction of Ballysalla, and there was as fine a dhrake as ever you could lay your two eyes on, and as nice a duck along with the dhrake becoorse, and the both were paddlin' on afore me;—and shure it come into my head, that they were tired—the cratures; they waddled over and hether at sich a rate; but sense that time I was often thinkin' twas the fat that made them hobble in their gate o' goin'—what do you think, Bridget?"

"Och! and it was the fat, sure enough,—he, he, he!"

"Faix, and may be your in the right. Well, howsomdever, havin' the notion that they were tired, sure I said to myself, I'd

carry e'em a start, and enough to do, I had to ketch e'm."

"Well, well; but sure that might put id in your head that they were'nt tired, Nelly."

"It never crossed my mind at that time, and more betoken; there's no dependin' on a duck or dhrake. I often seen 'em undher a horse's foot, an' you'd think the hoof was down on their backs; and afther all, they'd twist out o' the way, like a 'cute ould eel, and there would'nt be a feather touched."

"Well, afther a rale chase, shure I had my duck and my dhrake safe enough, and I puts one undher one arm, and another undher the other arm, an' draws the cloak over 'em, and I was goin' my way, when the widow Delouchry comes up to me, and she puts questions to me about the same duck and dhrake. Myself said I seen 'em crossin' the stubble field a little while ago, but then up comes the widow Delouchry's son to her help, and afther him her daughther--and they were all lookin' across the stubbles, when, my jewel, the

threacherous duck cries out, "walk, walk, walk," undher one arm, and her dhrake makes answer to her undher my other arm; and ochone, lanna machree, they tore open my mantle, widout sayin' by your leave, or how do you like it, and out they pulls misther dhrake and misthress duck for nent the world; and I gets a slap on one cheek wid the dhrake, and a slap on th'other cheek wid the duck, and they falls pullin' me to babby rags; but afore they had me tore asundher entirly, up gallops Father Connell on horseback, and he thried to make pase; and then, shure they tould him the whole story, and iv a sartainty, he looked very black at me, and shuck his wig frightful to see, and yet for all that, the ould creathure of a priest would'nt let em touch me any more, but tould me to make the best o' my way into the town; and he overtuk me on the road, and he gave me the best of advice; and he made enquiries about my way of livin', and every thing; and shure I tould the poor man how

the husband was dead, and how the childher war very badly off entirely; and I didn't say I stopped in the house wid Woodbine at all, only I gave him the name of another place—and what would you have of it, Bridget? when he came to help myself and the childher, he didn't find me where I said I had my lodgin'."

"Ho! ho! faix, and that was conthrary enough."

"Och, mostha, and the worst is to be tould yet, Bridget Mulrooney. Woodbine, as I made known to you, liked a bit o' mate, and he was hard run for the same one time; and Father Connell had two goats, to give him crame for his tay, the poor genthleman, and Woodbine comes across the goats; and as shure as you're planked there afore the fire, he brings the goats home wid him—so that becoorse we didn't want for roast and biled while they lasted. But murdher an' ages!—just as we were on the last of 'em, and it was purty late in the night when we were sitten at the faste—the latch o' the

dour was riz up, my jewel, and in walks Father Connell his own self!—and shure the goatskins was hangin' agin the walls, and they sould the pass on us. Oh! oh! oh! you wouldn't give threppence for our souls and bodies when we saw him standin' on the flure—we thought he'd ate us alive. But what do you think?—the poor foolish man spoke to us paceable enough, considhering we was afther devourin' his purty goats; and before goin' away, he tould us the worst thing he'd wish us was that they might be cryin' “mag-a-maa” in our stomachs; and now it's a downright truth I'm going to tell you, Bridget: Woodbine and myself, and two more, used to hear the “mag-a-maa” inside iv us every night for a long while afther.”

“Well, Bridget, asthore; if Woodbine and the rest of 'em was in throuble from the priest, sure its myself was in the rale, downright scrape. I thought to hide my head, remem-berin' about the dhrake and the duck; but he knew me at the first peep, my honey—and

though you'd think from the way he goes, that he wouldn't be able to take notice of you at all, his ould blue eye darts through you as sharp as a needle for all that."

"That's the truth, Nelly: we all know he has the sharp eye in his head."

"And yet, Bridget, if he seen the man that I seen to-day—though he has good rason to know that man well—keen as his eyes are, he could never call to mind who he was looking at."

"Arrah ! d'ye say so, and who was that man, Nelly?"

"I'll till you then, Bridget, and you'll say its a story worth harkenin' to. Its beyond thirty years ago, sence what I'm goin' to reharse for you happened. There was a clane young boy, at that time, livin' not far from this very place, and he went by the name of Robin Costigan ; and I was a very young girl then, and I'll say no more about Robin and myself, at present ; —only somehow it happened that Robin borrowed the loan of a horse, without axin lave,

and he was crotch on the back of that horse, at a fair, in the Queen's county; and—but murder! What's that at the door o' the house?"

Neither of the dames had heard Father Connell impart to Neddy Fennell his intention of soon coming back that very evening to their domicile. After his departure with the boy, they had sat down, without fear of interruption, for the night, to enjoy their "taty," and had therefore secured, on the inside, their crazy door, as well as they could. Hence, upon now hearing a loud thumping and kicking at it, considerable was their surprise, if not alarm. Up they bounced together, and together bawled out, through the chinks in their door, a questioning challenge to the unexpected visitors.

"Let me in, ye unfortunate creatures," answered the tones of Father Connell's well known voice, not angrily however.

Suppressing their screams, shouts indeed, if they had let them escape, one of the ladies

hastened to hide away as quickly as possible, all evidences of merry-making; while the second, with frank and hearty avowals of answering the priest's request, seemingly fumbled with great zeal to try and open the door; and when at last she did pull it open, great was her astonishment to see Father Connell and little Neddy pass in, each heavily laden with different kinds of burdens.

But, before continuing any longer this history, under the roof of Nelly Carty, and Bridget Mulrooney, we suddenly perceive a necessity for premising why our parish priest took Neddy Fennell with him, upon a promise of soon returning to the lad's mother, and where they went together, and how they now re-appeared burthened as has been noticed.

CHAPTER VIII.

STILL piloted by his friend Neddy, Father Connell had threaded his way through the shower of houses. He and his faithful guide cleared them, and the old man walking at so brisk a pace as almost to make the boy trot in order to keep up with him, the confidential pair halted before the outer door leading into the yard of the clergyman's residence. It was partially open, and Father Connell thought he should know the meaning of that circumstance; he said nothing, however, but crossing the yard to a little stable just opposite to him

unhasped its door as quietly as possible, and stealing in with his companion, who, no ways dull for his age, watched the priest's proceedings with much wonder, and perhaps some humour, took Neddy by the shoulders, placed him out of sight from any one passing by, mounted with great agility a ladder in one corner, gaining by its agency a hay and straw loft, and after a moment's delay handed down to his juvenile helper some four or five small bundles of fresh straw.

“ And now don't stir out of that, for your life,” he whispered, shaking his clenched hand at Neddy. “ No, not a foot until I come back to you again, Neddy.”

“ Never fear, sir,” answered the boy in a like cautious whisper, while he, in turn, shook his little fist in good mimicry—“ I'm not the lad to budge on you, sir,” and his priest patted his head, and seemed very well pleased at having so excellent a colleague in his contemplated enterprize.

Then he hasped the stable door upon Neddy: took out his latch key and opened the door of his house; stood upon its threshold, and peered before him and to each side, with increased vigilance. There was no one as yet visible. He advanced a step or two, paused, again peered in every direction, and listened;—all was still, right, and safe. He trod on tiptoe into Mrs. Molloy's kitchen: it was seemingly quite untenanted. He took a candle off her kitchen table and dared to invade her bed-chamber. He stealthily stripped the blankets from her bed; and was also about to steal a heavy patchwork quilt, but conscientiously hesitated for a moment; and deciding, after much deliberation, that the greater portion of it might have resulted from her own industry and contrivance, and not from his pocket, finally resisted the sore temptation. Yet, after that, he approached Mrs. Molloy's wardrobe,—an old trunk in which she kept all her more useful portions of dress; abstracted

from its contents, after much, and indeed not unpuzzled scrutiny, two nicely folded linen robes, of a certain description; rolled them up in her blankets; stealthily passed out again—his bundle under his arm—from her bed-room, and through her kitchen; and as stealthily ascended a little, narrow and very short staircase to his own sleeping apartment.

Here, the first theft he had to commit was easily got through; the blankets of his own bed were soon coiled over the pack he had already accumulated. But he also wanted a few shillings, and now some delay occurred. He placed Mrs. Molloy's candle on a chair, sat down on another and gazed wistfully and debatingly at an old fashioned piece of oaken furniture, partly writing desk and book case, and partly chest of drawers. In one of its recesses was a little linen bag with a running string containing money begged exclusively for the support of his parish poor school; durst he fairly and honestly make use, for a time, of any

portion of the contents of that little bag for any other purpose? He reasoned this case with his heart as well as with his mind; at last resolved that the call at hand was so urgent and peculiar that he indeed might do so—firmly promising to himself to replace with interest what he should now only borrow from the small hoard; and then he courageously appropriated the few shillings he had wanted and returned to the stable, there helping his youthful accomplice in this burglary on his own house to mount the straw on his shoulders, while he himself arranged to carry under one of his proper arms the goodly bundle plundered within doors.

In all his proceedings the good man was quite serious and earnest; while Master Neddy Fennell saw so much drollery in the whole affair that, in assisting with all possible gravity, as he was desired to do, in every necessary proceeding, a looker on might have detected in his eye and manner signs of a waggish enjoy-

ment, which, however, fully escaped Father Connell's notice.

But Father Connell had not been as successful as he imagined, in avoiding observation. To be sure, as he had sagely surmised, upon finding the door of his yard open, Mrs. Molloy was not at home—the lady having “slipped out” for a little gossip with some of the neighbours. But she had left “the boy” behind in care of the premises, strictly charging him not to stir till her return, and then carefully latching the door of the house upon him, and purposely leaving the outer door ajar, that she might steal in at her pleasure, and ascertain if her sentinel was duly on his post.

As the evening was bitterly cold, Tom Naddy, the “priest's boy,” resolved to establish himself, while keeping watch and ward, in the most comfortable position possible, within the house—which, as every one knows, or ought to know, must have been upon one of the huge hobs within the capacious kitchen chimney. Yet he

paused for an instant, refinedly canvassing the question as to which hob he ought to prefer to the other. That on which the cat reposed he finally resolved upon preferring, and so displaced madam puss, and sat down exactly where she had been, his knees up to a level with his chin; and as some recompense to her for his unceremonious usurpation of her throne, he then fixed Puss across his thighs, speaking fondly to her, and stroking her down, upon which his kitchen companion winked up at him with both her eyes, and began to purr gratefully. Thus established, the east wind might whistle, and the snow flake might dance to the tune, but neither Tom Naddy nor the cat chattered their teeth in unison with it.

Tom Naddy began to dose. The sound of a latch-key turning in the door of the house, fully restored him to his powers of observation. It was either Father Connell or Mrs. Molloy who was about to enter. If Mrs. Molloy, he did not care very much; if his master, he

did fear a remonstrance against sloth and idleness, accompanied perhaps by some hard pulling at his ears ; so without absolutely disturbing himself, he prudently bent his faculties of hearing, to interpret, to his own mind, the sound of the footstep which must follow the other sound he had just heard. Be it remarked, that Mrs. Molloy had, as well as Father Connell, a latch-key to the house door.

In one instant he became convinced that it was the priest who had come in ; upon which discovery Tom Naddy had no resource but to cringe himself up along with his cat, into the corner of the hob he occupied, that fortunately being the one thrown into deep shadow by the side of the chimney opposed to the small taper on Mrs. Molloy's kitchen table. The priest crept on tiptoe into Tom's presence, and for the reasons given, as well indeed as because his mind's eye had prepared itself for discerning solely the figure of his housekeeper, his " boy "

remained quite unnoticed by him. But that boy did not therefore continue ignorant of Father Connell's larceny in Mrs. Molloy's bedroom.

Before going farther, there is a slight reason why you should be loosely sketched, Tom Naddy. You were, at this time, about sixteen or seventeen, though no one could venture to say as much by looking at you. You were very significantly described, by your homely neighbours, as a "hard-grown brat;" short for your years, and not making up in bulk what you wanted in height. You had a jackdaw-colored eye, of which, it was not easy to define the expression. It did not we hope mean dishonesty; for according to Lavater's rule, you looked straight into one's face; yet there was something in your glance, which made your philosophical observer curious to find out, what that something was. Again, according to the sage mentioned, your nose had no hypocritical droop in it, but was on

the contrary—a goodly broad snub; and a further and a greater puzzle about you was, that nobody could ever say, whether it was a smile or a grin, which always played around your fleshless lips. And moreover, Tom Naddy, there appeared no boyishness about you. To be sure you had a certain easy slowness in your whole manner; not *laziness*, as your poor master would have called it, but a peculiar self-possession, often broken up by an unexpected briskness; and you were not a person of many words, although you whistled a great deal—not, however, it is conjectured, for want of thought; because your queer face never looked vacant; and even while seemingly given up, mind and soul, to produce the full pathos of “Molly Asthore,” there used to be occasionally an abstract meaning in your eye, foreign from your harmony, and you would wink, or grin, or smile, or wag your white-haired head, in the very middle of the tune.

So, no sooner had Father Connell ascended

to his own bedroom, than Tom Naddy, starting into one of his unusual instants of energy, very unceremoniously removed puss from his lap, darted through the open doorway of the house, and through that of the little yard also, and almost the next minute was shouldering into the cabin where he guessed Mrs. Molloy to be stationed, his assumption of briskness being, however, now forgotten, just as suddenly as it had seized upon him, while he moved very leisurely, and whistled slowly and beautifully.

When he confronted her, Mrs. Molloy paused in the midst of a holding forth, her hand suspended in mid air, and her tongue, for a novelty, between her open lips.

"Didn't I lave *you*, well latched in, to mind the house?" she asked in stern astonishment.

"There's some latch keys that opens what other latch keys shets in," answered Tom.

"What's that you say?"

"Fhu!" (shivering) "it's a cowl'd bitther

night to sleep widout blankets," was Tom's far off answer, and he resumed his interrupted whistling.

"Didn't you hear me, 'Tom Naddy?—didn't I lave you in charge of the place?"

"Yes ma—ma'am; but mostha, I couldn't stop his hand, if 'twas his liking to sthrip the house from the kitchen to the tatch on the roof in it, what I b'lieve he'll do afore he laves off."

"It's the mather at his work agin, neighbours," cried Mrs. Molloy, starting up and seizing her cloak, "jist as I was telling you! He won't lave himself, poor fool iv a man, a blanket to cover his bed—no, nor a shirt to cover his ould skin! I'll tell ye something he done that-o-way, for the hundredth time, a little while ago—"

Tom Naddy deemed that she was staying too long from home, and interrupted her—"there's other blankets in the house as well as his own, and other things like shirts, too."

She started back, asking in her guttural

tones, with utter surprise—"Is it *my* blankets, or any of *my* things you'd spake of?"

Tom broke up his whistling only with a sedate nod of assent.

Mrs. Molloy bounded, as well as she could, out of the cabin. She encountered Father Connell and Neddy Fennell in the middle of the yard, each heavily laden, and just about to escape with their spoil. She whisked the tails of her cloak over each arm, thus having her hands at liberty to stretch themselves out, while her voice croaked more than usual, and the beard on her two chins might be said to stir and bristle.

"Well to be sure! Isn't this a poor case! I'm downright ashamed o' you, sir! It's a burning scandal, sir—an' will you never give up these doings?—an' I'll not stand this, sir—an' I'll not put up with it, sir—an' I'll have you to know that I won't, sir!"

Father Connell, thus detected, after all his precautions, only smiled inwardly, however, as

he said in a temporising voice, "Peggy, Peggy, anger is a deadly sin!"

"An' what kind of a sin do you call thievin', sir? Yes, thievin'—*I* can call it by no other name, sir."

"Let me pass out, good woman," said the priest sternly, although he was now more disposed to laugh heartily; "and be patient, Peggy. be patient."

"Patient in troth! patient! I can't be patient—and to ould Nick I pitch patience!—Look at that big hape undther your arum—my own things rowled up along wid your's!—patient! why, if a holy saint was sent o' purpose down to keep house for you, and to look afther herself and yourself, you'd torment the very life and sowl out iv her in a week, so you would; here I am, from Sunday morning to Saturday night, striving, an' scraping, an' piecing, an' patching, for the two ov us—an' all to no purpose—no, but worser an' worser for all I can do; an' now to make up the

matther, you come ov sich an evening as this, and ov sich a night as this will be, to make me an' you get our death o' could in our beds."

"There is no fear of that Peggy; we can still manage to rest comfortably for one short night, in a good, warm house; but I must go with these things, to the help of two poor, naked women, who might really perish before morning on the damp earth, and without covering of any kind; so you had better let us go on our way peaceably, Peggy."

Mrs. Molloy darted quickly at Neddy Fennell, making a grasp at his burden, as she vociferated—"go on your way!—the long and the short ov it is, since you put me to it, there is no blanket to lave this to-night—no, nor the thread ov a blanket."

Her master now became really severe and determined. He removed her arm from the boy's fardel, put her to one side, and saying, "be silent, my good woman, be silent, and stand out of my way;—more than once since you

came in here, you have uttered sin with your lips, and offended me—of that we will speak another time;—now, go out of my way, I say—I command you;—come, Neddy Fennell, come;” and without further opposition from Mrs. Molloy, who became perfectly stunned at this sudden and most unexpected annihilation of her authority—the priest and his follower cleared the premises.

A moment after their departure, Tom Naddy lounged to her side from the corner of an end wall of the stable, round which all along he had been listening and peeping; and while Mrs. Molloy still stood silent and utterly confounded, remarked—“ Ho! ho!—so, the priest is to do whatever he likes in the house for the future.”

“ Get out, you kiln dried brat!” was the housekeeper’s only reply, as she stamped in much dignity, into her kitchen; while on his part Tom only sauntered after her, and resumed his place and his cat upon the hob.

Father Connell, closely followed by Neddy Fennell, bent his steps, by the least observable route, back again to the shower of houses. On his way thither, however, he stopped at more than one suburb shop to purchase, with the shillings he had almost thieved from his own curious escrutoire, additional articles of comfort for the Widow Fennell and her aged aunt.

He has been observed re-entering the abode of the potatoe beggars. A moment after, the two poor shivering, half-dead women, in the inner dungeon saw, with feelings and sensations, which only those who for a long time have been very, very poor, and neglected, can at all understand, the unloading from the shoulders, and the arms, and the hands of the old man, and the boy, the nice, clean, fresh straw, the gracious roll of blankets, a basket full of bread, a little crock of salt butter, a whole pound of halfpenny candles, and two or

three black bottles, with old corks in them, containing huxter's ale and porter.

Standing quite erect, a disencumbered man, after getting rid of his burdens, Father Connell paused a moment, to wipe his brow with his handkerchief; then silently went to the miserable couches of the two forlorn sufferers; squeezed their hands in turn, and passed into the comparatively aristocratic abode of Nelly Carty and Bridget Mulrooney; and just after doing so, he thought he caught whisperings between Mrs. Fennell and her young son, as if in explanation of what had come about, and, almost immediately following sounds of suppressed crying, though not in an unhappy cadence.

No matter how our hero, Father Connell, arranged with the two good ladies of the mansion, they quickly went into their lodgers, to all appearance most benevolently, and of course, fussily active. The priest sat down,

before their impudent little fire, calling Neddy Fennell to him. The little lad, slowly though immediately obeyed his old friend's summons, reclining on the floor, and gently leaning the side of his head upon one of the priest's knees. He did not speak a word, but knowing that he was weeping plentifully in his silence, his patron just slid down his hand, fumbled for one of Neddy's, and squeezed it and squeezed it.

The pair rose up, as the two potatoe beggars approached the fire, each with one of their poor inmates, carried like weak, burthenless infants, in her arms—and be it added, both the hitherto destitute women well wrapped up in blankets, with intimations here and there about their necks, of inside personal comforters, previously the property of Mrs. Molloy.

Father Connell then went back to their bedroom, with Neddy's help bore out portions of the bread and butter and a bottle of the small porter: mulled some of the latter with his own

hands, and leaving his protégées to enjoy so far, under the still bustling attentions of their landladies, unwonted luxuries, again took Neddy into the inner chamber, which he and his young assistant did not quit until they had heaped, breast high, their stolen straw into two palmy couches, and scientifically pressed each down, and covered each with a half of a yet unappropriated blanket, torn asunder by them according to their best skill. In fact that blessed night our old fairy friend, poor little Fanny Fennell and her infirm old aunt went to sleep, the first time for many months, in downy comfort; and with a happy sense of animal warmth and refreshment, and a still, still happier moral sense of yet having a single friend left to them in the wide, cold world. Before they quite closed their eyes, as they laughed and cried at one and the same time, how often did their prayers and their blessings ascend, not unheard we do reverently hope, to the footstool of The Throne, for the earthly and

eternal welfare of their simple hearted, unostentatious, humble samaritan!

It was still necessary, for the second time this evening, that Neddy Fennell should guide his priest through the mazes of the shower of houses. They arrived at the spot where they were finally to part for the night. The priest here stopped for an instant, to bid Neddy good night, and give him his blessing. As he was turning homewards, the boy spoke in low, broken accents.—

“Wait a minute sir, if you please—I want to say a word to you;—it may be on your mind, sir, from the way that I helped you, and spoke to you, this evening in the stable, with other things, that I’m a cold-hearted boy, with no thought or feeling in me, for my mother’s and my aunt’s distress, and for your kindness;—but, indeed I’m not, sir;—I’m not that, sir, indeed;—I—I—” and here the giddy-pated little fellow, could get no further, but breaking out into sobbing and crying, turned his back

on the priest, and ran home as fast as he could.

In a very short time afterwards, Father Connell, and Mrs. Molloy, and Tom Naddy, were as good friends as ever they had been in their lives. The housekeeper placed before him the little measure of ale, with a foaming head on it, which he emptied every night before going to bed, and which, with a crust to eke it out, was his beau ideal of luxurious indulgence. A good fire, renewed by cinders, heated his outstretched limbs, and glittered in the large silver buckles of his shoes. To his left hand, was his allowance of ale; to his right, pen and ink; and while he sipped his beverage, and munched his crust, we may transcribe—peeping over his shoulders, as well as the protuberance of the great wig above his ears will allow, the following entries, made by him in a curiously-covered book, which he called his journal, and, in which, for very many years, he had made some daily notes.

“ I got up at three o'clock this morning to say my usual matins: it threatened to be a bitter day, and a bitter day it has been. I went to bed at four, and slept very well until seven: attended the chapel at eight: the snow was pelting in my face. God help the poor! Will the disbeliever persuade the poor man that there is no Heaven?—he would then make the lot of the poor a hard one indeed. Those who sleep on beds of the softest down, and need but to wish for everything in order to have it, are they as good Christians as the Widow Fennell and her aunt have been? God bless the good friends whose bounty enabled me to put warm clothing on so many naked children and boys this day. Mick Dempsey would cover the shivering body of only a good boy—Mick does not remember that the blast is as bitter to the bad boy as to the good boy; and that the Lord does not send the sunshine to the good only. It is not wise to drive even the most wicked to

despair ; if they have no hope of being better they will not try to be so ; and Mick Dempsey was not right when he gave me to understand that I was encouraging idleness. I humbly hope that I was doing something that may help to change it into industry. Neglected my middle of the day prayers. *Misere mei Domine!* Our prayers should never be overlooked, especially by a priest ; a priest is bound to give good example ; he cannot hope to do this without grace ; and grace is chiefly to be obtained by prayer. Reprehended Peggy Molloy for her tongue and bad language—not too severely, I think—and she seems the better of it ; she is faithful and honest ; a faithful and honest servant is a treasure ; but Peggy must be taught not to fall into a passion ; violent anger is like drunkenness—for the drunken and the angry man both forget their wisdom ; almost as many crimes spring from the one as the other. The first fair day I have I must beg all through the

town, and then in the country, for the Widow Fennell, her poor aunt, and young Neddy. God help them all. I love that little boy in my very heart; and with God's help will be an earthly father to him."

And so ended our priest's entries in his journal for one day.

CHAPTER IX.

ACTIVE charity, like all other active things, when once put into motion, soon gains its goal. Father Connell had been saying and doing, and going backwards and forwards a good deal, to say nothing of contriving and suffering a good deal, since he first left his school-house for the shower of houses this evening; and yet though all his contemplated work is now over, and he is luxuriantly preparing for bed at home, it is still early in the night. Neddy Kennell arrived at the door of his lodgings, after his final parting with his priest, while

the nine o'clock bell—the curfew—or as it was locally and elegantly termed—the “black-guards’ bell” rang out a quick peal from the curious wooden structure, very like an opera glass pulled out—surmounting the market-house of his native city.

His knock and request for re-admission were soon attended to, his small boy’s voice outside, being a sufficient warrant to his landladies of his identity. Passing into their house, a glance towards the fire showed him that the honest dames had contrived, during his short absence, to replace, as originally arranged, all the materials for their feast, which Father Connell’s unexpected return caused them to push aside here and there and hide as well as they could, and the cook, for the evening, had the “tay” again nearly hot enough, while the bottle of “colliery crame” once more flanked it.

Without making further observations, however, the boy passed into the apartment occupied by his mother and her aunt, to observe

how they were disposed of for the night. Under the influence of all the comforts they had just experienced, the poor women already began to doze. One of his mother's hands hung by the side of her couch. He went on his knees and gently stole it back again—but not before his lips had touched it—under the blankets; and then, bestowing a little thought on himself, Neddy took a goodly lump of bread from the basket on the floor; at the repeated invitations of Nelly Carty and Bridget Mulrooney, stole out on tiptoe, to their fire, accepted a proffered seat on one of the yellow clay hobs; and while industriously making way through his supper, he could not avoid becoming greatly interested in the resumed conversation of his hostesses.

“ Well, Nelly,” said Bridget, “ here we are on the hunkers before our little fire again, and what is left of the tay and the cake a'most as good as ever; and its mad intirely I am, yis indeed, to hear the rest that you have to tell about that Robin Costigan.”

“ Well an’ sure lanna machree, Nelly Carty, won’t be long till she satisfies you. Well, Bridget, sure, as I gave you to untherstand afore the ould priest kem in, Robin and myself were great cronies, and faix, I’ll never deny that I liked the boy well. Bud, Bridget, sure it happened one of a time, that my poor Robin borry’d the loan iv a horse, widout axin lave, an’ sure over again, he was coteh on the back of that horse at a fair in the Queen’s county : and they brought the poor boy to his thrial afore the judge, an’ I thought my heart would break, they found him guilty, an’ sintinced him to die. An’ sure enough, the ugly lookin’ gallows was put up for Robin on the Green abroad, and sure enough he was walked to the gallows, and it was the same Father Connell that quitted us a little while agone, that stepped out by his side to the gallow’s fut. Well asthore. The day that was in it, was a winter’s day. I’ll never forget it, one o’ the dark, black days afore Christmas ; and the evenin’ began to fall amost

before he was turned off; an' when the time come to cut the rope, cut it was; and sure meeself was the very girl that caught him in my arms."

" Yourself, Nelly?" half shrieked Bridget. As for Neddy Fennell, his jaws stopped grinding his loaf, while he stared in startled surprise at the narrator.

" Meeself, Bridget. Well, *alanna-machree*, sure I thought I felt a stir in my poor Robin," Neddy Fennell had taken another bite at his loaf, but again stopped short in his preparations to masticate it.

" An' you could'nt count twenty, afore I had him in a good warm bed, and Darby Croak the bleether there by his side; an' surely, surely, the stir in poor Robin got more life in it from time to time; an' surely, surely, over agin, many hours didn't go by till we had my poor fellow alive, an' as well as ever—ay, an' laughin' heartily too at the brave escape he had—tho' that afther all, might be a little bit

iv a secret betuxt himself an' the *skibbeeah**—
an' faix we spent as pleasant a night as kem from
that to this—in wakin' the poor corpse, as we
called it."

"Are you tellin' the truth, Nelly Carty?"
gasped Neddy Fennell quite aghast.

"Wait, Neddy my pet—sure there's a little
more to come. It was about an hour afore
day-break, when my poor Robin strolled out,
just to see how his legs would go on along
some iv the roads convainent afther the dance
upon nothin' they had the day afore. In the
coorse iv the night, sure he swore a big oath to
us, that he'd never borry a horse agin, becuse
they war unlooky cattle; but he made no oath
agin cows, and it's as thrue as that I'm sittin'
here tellin' it, afore the mornin' quite broke,
Robin borryed a nice fat cow, out of a field
by the road-side. Well, *alanna machree*, the
cow didn't turn out a lookier baste for Robin
nor the horse."

* Hangman.

“ What’s that you’re goin’ to say now,” again interrupted Neddy Fennell, “ was he hanged over again, Nelly ?”

“ Faix an’ if he was’nt, Neddy my honey, he had very little to spare that he was’nt ; for the man that thought he had a betther right to the cow than Robin, soon missed her, an’ ran thro’ the town clappin’ his hands, an’ got all the help he could ; an’ sure they all kem up with the poor boy, on the road to the fair ov Bennet’s-bridge, an’ he in the cow’s company ; an’ so they laid hoults on him, an’ made him turn back, without the cow, and they rammed him into their gaol agin.”

“ Well,” whispered Neddy.

“ Well, *a-cuishla-gal-machree*, there he was, shure enough—only not for a long time, for well became Robin, he found manes ov breakin’ out ov their gaol, an’ from that blessed hour to this no livin’ crature but myeslf ever set eyes on him in the town. But now listen well to me, Bridget, and you, Neddy Fennell ; afther five

an' thirty years is past an' gone, an' I an ould woman, I seen Robin Costigan this day, as sure as I now see ye both forenent me."

Many were the ejaculations of surprise, and indeed almost of terror, uttered by the listeners. "And to-day, Nelly? when? where? how?" they asked together.

"Whist! spake lower, none ov us spoke very loud yet, but now we are to spake lower than ever--and for a good rason. I said that Father Connell had a sharp eye, and that he ought to remember Robin Costigan, for wasn't it he that made his sowl for him at the gallow's fut? But the ould priest couldn't know him now, Bridget, for Robin is changed by years, and he is changed by conthrivances, but *I* knew him well, Bridget, from the minute I saw him. I can't say that he had the same knowledge of me when he looked me in the face—but *I* used to be too fond iv *him* long ago, ever, ever to forget him. And I tell you I saw him this very day, and I tell you more

than that ; I saw him in the very next house—in Joan Flaherty's house."

Bridget Mulrooney thumped her breast, crossed herself, and turned up her eyes. Neddy Fennell jumped off the hob, breathing hard, and frowning abhorringly, and it would seem indignantly, at the remote end wall of the hovel, which divided him from Joan Flaherty's house. This wall however, did not rise higher than the point at which the wattles of the roof commenced, so that an inmate of either abode, could by standing on a chair, or even upon a stool, peep into the other.

After a few moments, Nelly Carty resumed slowly, and in whispers, and Neddy again seating himself on the hob, changed his wide opened, glowing eyes from the end wall to her face.

" An' he is a beggerman now iv you plaise ; and he has a poor, withered limb, *morya*,* an' I seen three childher wid him that he takes into the street, when he goes a begging."

* By the way.

“ Tell me this, Nelly,” asked Neddy Fennell suddenly, and as if wishing for an answer in the affirmative, “ if the judge heard he was alive, wouldn’t he have him hung over again?”

“ Faix, an’ I’m thinking he would my lanna; sure they owe him the last hanging at any rate; an’ I’d go bail that if they had a houl’t iv’ him now, they’d—but be asy wid your thricks, ye young limb.”

A handful of small pebbles, as it seemed, clattering and jingling among Nelly’s “ tay things” caused her thus suddenly to interrupt herself.

“ It wasn’t I that did it, Nelly, though I often played you a trick before now,” answered Neddy Fennell very slowly, and in the least possible whisper—“ it wasn’t I that did it; but just turn your head behind you, and look towards the far end of the room.”

“ Don’t, Bridget! Don’t for the world wide,” admonished Nelly—“ it’s himself is in it—I

know it is; for there is no male crature living on Joan Flaherty's flure along wid him."

So neither of the good ladies obeyed Neddy Fennell's command. The boy, however, saw indistinctly, in the almost complete darkness, at the remote point he peered at, the head and shoulders of a man elevated over the imperfect division wall.

"Is the ould priest gone?" asked this apparition, in stealthy and husky tones.

Nelly winked at Bridget to answer, and Bridget accordingly said—"he is gone these three hours, neighbour."

"Will he come agin to night, ye ould *collochs*?"* continued the same voice.

"No, surely, neighbour, he is gone for this night, sartin."

"*Bannath lath*,† then," and the head and shoulders disappeared. A dead silence suc-

* Hags

† Good night

ceeded. Nelly Carty held up her hand, and significantly looked her meaning at Bridget Mulrooney, who, in return, nodded her head.

“Neddy Fennell,” added Nelly, “for the worth ov the life that’s in you, and that’s in all our bodies,”—she whispered these words into his very ear—“don’t let out o’ you a breath of what you have heard here this night; mind my words.”

They all went to bed, Neddy lying down on some straw, confronting that side of the house occupied by Monsieur the pig; while his gentle hostesses unfolding certain rolled-up parcels in the corners to the right and left of the fireplace, but which, after all, contained only straw pallets, with very wretched covering, made their own couches thereof.

CHAPTER X.

So full of the idea of Robin Costigan—the man that had been nearly twice hung, thirty-five years ago, and yet at present was alive—so full of this unique personage was Neddy Fennell's head, that for hours he could not sleep. He felt, above all things, great curiosity to see, distinctly, the features of the fellow towards whom he could not avoid indulging prepossessions of awe and terror along with those of strong dislike and distrust. Neddy's terror was not, however, of the cowardly kind.

At last he did sleep, but his slumbers were disturbed, with dream after dream of the fearful robber, and each of the most distressingly nervous kind ; until at last, he started awake again, trembling and shuddering, and bathed in perspiration.

The darkness around him was so deep, that “ a horror of it,” as is sublimely said in the holy writings, “ fell upon him.” The wintry winds abroad, whistled and piped around the half rotten hovel which enclosed him, and sometimes, swelling into a great rage, pushed and jostled as it were, against its mud walls until they shook again. Presently, a weak cry of human sorrow, mingled he thought, with the alternate wailing, and howling, and roaring of the blast. He quickly sat up on his straw couch, and listened intently. The cries were repeated, he became quite sure ; and more, they came over the boundary wall, between him and Robin Costigan’s lodging.

He continued to listen. In one of the half pauses of the tempest, the poor, weak cry changed into a smothered shriek, immediately after the sound, as if of a heavy blow, had reached Neddy's ears.

"Helo there!" he suddenly screamed out, his shrill, young voice, piercing above the various noises of the wind.

All sounds ceased in the neighbouring hut. He listened attentively, still neither the poor weak cry, nor the blow, nor the shriek, was repeated. He dropped asleep again; and, as the first peep of day struggled, doubtless unwillingly, through the atmosphere of the shower of houses, Neddy was up and out, washing his face in the snow, drifted before the house-door, half in great glee, half in a luxurious feeling of refreshment; and when his toilet had been completed, the light-hearted boy, industriously fell to work, making snow-balls, piling them pyramidically at his side, and peering around him in every direction for the approach of

some foe, against whom, he might discharge them.

In the twilight of the bleak and bitter winter morning, not many objects of enmity appeared, however, stirring abroad ; but the few who did appear, within range of his battery, soon felt a snow shot breaking about their ears ; for Master Neddy Fennell had often shared in a “ pelting match ” of no very playful character, between the mutually abhorring boys of two rival schools ; so that from practice, his aim, particularly when directed against a human cranium, became almost unerring.

He was pausing for a new enemy ; none appeared ; but the patched and tattered door of Joan Flaherty’s abode uttered a squeak, and then it slowly opened a little, and a man’s head, thickly covered with matted grey hair, protruded itself through the opening, and now turned one way, and now another, as if, by the agency of its proper eyes, taking an observation of the weather.

“ The old robber’s head ! ” thought Neddy, frowning and setting his teeth, and looking hard to make out Robin Costigan’s features. But he could distinguish none ; the head being poked forward, so that only its large crown became satisfactorily visible ; Neddy had in his right hand as nice a snow-ball as even he had ever manufactured. With both hands he now gave it two or three additional squeezes, until it grew almost as hard as a stone ; the next instant bang it went, like a bursting bomb-shell, against the crown of the mysterious and detested head, causing, it may be presumed, an explosion like thunder in the ears and in the interior of its object, at all events making that object disappear, as if it and its owner had been sent staggering backwards into Mrs. Flaherty’s, or Miss Flaherty’s tenement ; for the question of title, was in the present case rather a debated one.

Many seconds did not elapse before Neddy had the door of his own temporary residence

secured on the inside ; and, while his landladies and their pig still slept on and snorted together, was peeping into his neighbour's apartment, over the division wall, just as Robin Costigan, though from its other side, had peeped over it, the night before, into the secrecy of the residence of Mesdames Carty and Mulrooney.

Here he at first saw nothing but smoke. Waiting sometime, and peering more sharply, he at length imperfectly discerned Joan Flaherty—a half blind, and a wholly deaf and stupid old crone, sitting on her heels at a hearth, upon which, using her own mouth as a bellows, she puffed and puffed with a view of kindling some atrocious materials for a fire ; while almost for every puff she coughed and coughed, as if earnestly trying to force up her worn out old lungs. But though the young caves-dropper could as yet see no living thing but Joan, he could hear the sounds of other human voices than her's. He could hear threats and imprecations uttered in a morose, masculine

voice ; and plaintive expostulations, or lamentations, in the tones, he believed, which had reached him, the previous night ; and the subdued cry of an infant, too, and the sturdier wail of another young voice—all mixed up with the coughing, and the wheezing, and the bellows-blowing, of old Joan. The venomous smoke made Neddy's eyes smart and run water ; still he perseveringly clung, insecurely supported, to the top of the mud wall. In about half an hour, the exhausted beldame had succeeded, in kindling her fire, and having previously thrown open the door of her house, to let out the pestilent fog it had engendered, Neddy could make further observations. Standing near to her, and towards the farther side of the fire, he saw a man of rather low stature, yet of herculean build, combing with his fingers, over his forehead and face, and even upon his shoulders, his long, dishevelled, grey hair ; and from the care with which the operation was performed, it seemed evident

that he considered it one of great importance. He was enveloped in a loose, blue, frieze coat, reaching in tatters below his knees; the half of his legs, that could be seen from under it, were bare; and old brogues, too large for him, and partially stuffed with straw—as was indicated by blades of that article starting up over their inner sides—adorned his immense ill shaped feet. Again Neddy Fennell tried to make out the features of Robin Costigan; but the redoubtable robber stood with his side turned to Neddy; and this circumstance, aided by the thick veil of grey hair, and the high standing collar of Robin's wrap-rascal, once more baffled his scrutiny.

Other objects drew Neddy's deep attention. While engaged in his toilet, as has been described, Robin Costigan severely studied the proceedings of three children, who had not yet quite arisen from the straw, in which during the night they had burrowed. One was a girl of about nine years, wearing only

the scantiest and most shreddy drapery, secured by any possible contrivance, around her elegantly formed little person. The second was a boy, an incipient giant--say of five years. His upper dress, consisted of an old waistcoat, his bare arms thrust through its arm holes; while a threadbare piece of sacking tied round his waist, descended almost to his feet. And the third child was no more than an infant, rolled up in a most curious bundle of rags; its sex is not yet known; but the strong presumption is, that it was a little female human creature.

The girl was busily employed, scrubbing at the infant's face, with a coarse damp cloth. The boy was sitting in his straw, his chin resting on his little fists, and they in turn resting on his crippled-up knees—it was perfectly evident, that he contemplated in mortal terror and deep dislike, the process he beheld going on, inasmuch as he expected to be himself very soon subjected to a similar one.

The infant gave a restive squall, and had it been any other infant, would certainly have fought, with full lungs, kicks, and wreathings, against the uncongenial friction inflicted upon its face, in such very, very, cold weather. But a bellow from the man, of the tattered “riding coat,” at once terrified the little animal into seeming acquiescence; it became silent and still, tears only running down its miserable face, as it fixed its frightened eyes on the bellower.

“Divil’s in your wizend, ye *sheeog*,*” apostrophized the superintendant of the scrubbing, “there’s no squall from you, when its wantin’; but I’ll larn you to bawl out in the right time, and to hould your whisht in the right time—burroo!”—another bellow—“hould it up to me here,” addressing the scrubber, who with visible trepidation obeyed. The man critically inspected the face, neck, hands, and arms of

* Fairy-struck child---a fairy.

the unfortunate baby, twisting it and its little limbs, here and there, with about as much compassion, as if he were scrutinizing the points of a turkey offered to him for sale. He continued; speaking to the little girl.

“ Well for you, you jade, that there’s not a speck, the size of a pin’s head, or I’d make you rue the day; fall to the legs and feet now, an’ make ’em as clane as a whistle;” and he went on combing his hair with his fingers.

“ Hould it up agin,” he commanded after a short pause.

“ Do you call them washed, you faggot?” and he accompanied his words with a blow from his open hand, that sent the girl and the infant rolling in the straw. She could not keep in a scream. “ Not a tune from you now, or I’ll give you last night over agin,” he snatched up a cudgel near at hand.

“ I won’t cry, nor I won’t say one word—I won’t, I won’t, sir, dear,” said the little scrubber, clasping her charge with one of her bare arms,

rising to her knees, and joining both her hands.

“It will keep for another time, then,” and the cudgel was put aside; “but go on with your work I tell you, and don’t bring my hand on you.”

Her eyes gushing, but every whisper kept in, she proceeded, still further to torture the infant, by rubbing with the coarse, wet cloth, at its legs and feet, as if she were bound to rub them quite away. Her overseer inspected her work again, and grumbled something like a half approval. He then examined the cap which was to cover the little being’s head for the day, and which the girl ought to have perfectly washed over night. It was found not to be at all satisfactory, and a second swinging blow from his open hand followed.

The tire-woman before she could recover herself, was next ordered to attack with her cloth the shivering, and detesting young rascal, who, it has been said, awaited his

turn in no amiable feelings. Very well did he know that he must not utter a sound of disapproval in the presence of the grey-headed supervisor; but to make amends for his silence he bit, whenever he thought that he was unobserved by his tyrant, the hands and arms of his attendant, until he almost fetched blood from them; while she, poor young creature, durst not utter a sound of complaint.

Her own person was next to be looked after; her pretty little face, her neck, arms, and hands, and her lower limbs and extremities to be carefully washed; and her abundant golden hair to be combed and adjusted in its natural curls adown her cheeks and shoulders with the best possible effect. And until this new task was completed, to the full approval of her master, she was scrutinized and found fault with, as in the case of the infant and boy, and heavy punishment was still inflicted.

She now produced a small bag, containing about one dozen of potatoes; and these she

was commanded to wash, and place on the fire to boil; after which the man gave peremptory orders that the "breakfast" should be finished, and the three children ready to set out with him into the streets "in the turn of a hand;" and then he left the hovel. A short time afterwards he might be found in a mean public house, sitting to a good fire, with his own breakfast placed before him, consisting of a loaf of bread, a cut of butter, a dish of "rashers and eggs," and a quart of mulled porter, with a "stick in it"—that is to say, about two glasses of whiskey. As he opened the door to go out, Neddy Fennell abandoned his post of observation, with the view of at last fully confronting him abroad, and reading attentively the mysterious features of the half-hanged scoundrel; but a call from his mother's couch was not to be neglected.

He found the poor woman and her aunt much refreshed, after a good night's sleep. Milk had been sent that morning, by Father

Connell, for their and his use ; this he heated, and Neddy's patients soon ate a hearty breakfast. He then prepared some for himself, and put it into a noggin, lent to him by his landladies ; also furnished himself with his share of bread—and be it noticed, not more than his share—took a few bites and sips, and passed with the bread in one hand, and the noggin in the other, into the neighbouring wigwam.

The small pot containing the dozen potatoes, was now boiled in this plentiful house and taken off the fire ; and to one side of it, sat the cook who had prepared them—the baby on her knees ; to the other, the gruff little boy, who had so well bitten her, knelt to his occupation, as if he felt more devotion towards it than could be expressed by a sitting posture ; for the trio were engaged, each more or less, in consuming the contents of the pot.

To make amends for the late coercion imposed on its natural propensity to cry out as shrilly as it could, the nondescript infant now

screamed at the pitch of three Scotch bagpipes: while its nurse endeavoured literally to stop its mouth with the largest potatoes she could find: herself being only able from time to time, to swallow a scanty mouthful. Not so the wicked-faced young cannibal opposite to her. Resolved he seemed, as in truth resolved he was, to take ample advantage of her inability to satisfy her appetite. He peeled off the skins of the potatoes, and then dropped them as it were, into his stomach with astonishing despatch; yet it was not an expression of relish of his fare that appeared in his face; it was the jealous fierceness of craving hunger; and his scowl at the girl was actually ferocious, whenever she abstracted a potatoe from the limited store, which he could have well appropriated entirely to himself.

Neddy Fennell stood over this group without being noticed by any one of it. Laying his bread across his noggin, and the hand that

had lately held it, upon the glossy golden hair of the little maid-of-all-work.

“ My poor little girl,” he said, “ will you take a little bit of bread, and a little hot milk from me.” She started and raised her eyes: now that it could be viewed clearly her face looked prettier than before; but she only stared at Neddy without uttering a word.

“ Try it, poor little girl,” he went on, seating himself on the floor by her side, “ taste it—do now; ’tis very nice—and ’tis my own,” he did not know how to account for her look of speechless astonishment; but it was the very first time during that little creature’s whole life, that a human voice had so sounded in her ears, or a human hand had been so stretched forth to offer her unbegged food. He broke a morsel of bread, and put it into her hand; she mechanically conveyed it to her lips, and then ate it ravenously. Neddy held up his noggin to her, and inclining it sideways for her ac-

comodation, she drank a little of the hot milk. Tears then ran from her eyes, while in the cant of the profession in which she had been tutored, she whined out:—

“ May God reward the hand of help, and the tendher heart of charity.”

“ Give me some of that,” growled the little savage at the other side of the pot.

“ You ?” answered Neddy—“ I won’t give you a mouthful.”

“ By the big divil, I’ll tell the ould fellow. if ye don’t,” retorted the apt scholar of a worthy teacher.

“ Here then, here,” said the governess, quickly handing over to him almost the whole of the pieces of bread her young visitor had given her, in the teeth of Neddy’s remonstrances to prevent her doing so. They disappeared as quickly as does a fish into water.

“ And the good milk !” he continued hoarsely, for some of the unaccustomed food had stuck in his throat.

She ran over to him, the infant chucked up on one arm, with the noggin, which Neddy had now left, according to her entreaties at her disposal.

The bundled-up infant seeing that all was holiday around it, held out its arms, opened its mouth, to an unusual span, and also tyrannically insisted upon its share. Its poor little attendant could not, or at least did not reject its appeal, so that in a few moments, neither Neddy nor his new acquaintance had another mouthful of the bread and milk to divide between themselves.

But in a very short time, notwithstanding this privation, they were making each others acquaintance rapidly. At Neddy's repeated solicitations, the little girl went into a history of all her sorrows,—speaking in whispers, lest the prematurely desperate character, who had so often fastened his tusks in her flesh, might overhear the discourse. Neddy listened, sometimes in pity, sometimes in wrath; and with

his whole heart and soul his eyes were fastened unwinkingly upon her face, and one of his hands was again laid unconsciously on her shining, golden hair; suddenly he felt her start and shudder, while her looks fixed upon some object, in a very agony of terror. The next instant, Neddy Fennell and Robin Costigan were staring directly at each other.

The beggarman's lip and chin had not been shaved for some time, so that the growth of his beard, disguised the form of his mouth. His nose too, was but half distinguishable through the streaks of grey hair, which he had combed with his fingers nearly over its whole length, and so far, all appeared sufficiently lachrymose, and pity-stirring in his physiognomy. But even through the shade of that hair, two eyes darted their rays upon Neddy Fennell, under the bad and deep expression of which, the intrepid boy quailed for a moment, but it was only for a moment:

and then, his steady though inquisitive glance, fully met the baleful glare of the other.

“ Who are you, my chap ? ” demanded the beggarman.

“ I’m myself, and who are you ? ” smartly asked Neddy in his turn.

“ You live in the next house ? ”

“ To be sure I do—well ? ”

The man did not immediately continue speaking. He took up the infant, and folded it very deliberately into the bosom of his loose blue riding-coat.

“ Are ye coming ? ” he roared to the girl, and the wicked little boy. They took their places at his either side. He seized the youngster with one hand ; crippled up the fingers of the other towards his mouth, and then issued with his “ helpless orphans,” from the miserable hut.

Outside its threshold he found Neddy Fennell, still closely studying himself and his actions ; and—

“Take care of yourself, my bouchal, and keep out of my way,” he growled.

“Let *you* take care of *yourself*, and keep out of *my* way,” retorted Master Neddy.

And, at a little distance, the boy followed him and his poor companions through the puzzle of the shower of houses, and then, through a scarcely less dirty suburb, into the town, pondering much as he trudged through the snow and the biting blast. He had, at length, scrutinized, as far as was possible, the features of the object of his great wonder and detestation. And they did not much disappoint his notions beforehand, of what those of the hero of Nelly Carty’s tale ought to have worn. They were such features too, as well became the brutal fellow, whom he had seen tormenting and beating the children a few hours ago. But why he should have so tormented and beaten them, merely to have their hands and faces, and little limbs, scrubbed perfectly to his satisfaction, seemed a difficult question to

solve. The beggarman began, in the first considerable street of the town, an oratorical appeal to the public, in which those very little creatures were noticed in the most affectionate and touching terms; and Neddy's difficulties increased: he could see no identity between the robber, who had been nearly twice walked to the gallows' foot, and who, so very lately, had given proofs of the unaltered scoundrelism of his nature, and the poor mendicant now before him, whom every one pitied and relieved, on account of his love and care of his little orphans. But ere the appeal had been quite gone through he began to understand the matter. The wretched man, who could not afford for himself or for them, any thing like covering, sufficient in the present perishing weather, still, it was evident to any observer, tried to perform towards the innocents, some of the duties of a parent, and upon this conviction public sympathy could not fail to be aroused.

“ Avoch, see,” cried the women as he passed along, “ he’s hardly able to keep a stitch on himself or them; and yet, see how clane and dacent he has ’em, the cratures.”

His appeal must be transcribed. It was made up of short sentences, and published, in a loud, sonorous voice, which rose and fell, in oratorical cadence, with, it may be said, each separate verse. As he went on with it, his head turned, from side to side; his crippled hand and arm (the same which had clutched and wielded the cudgel, the night before) imperfectly gesticulated, in a very awful manner; and all his features, even his eyes, so far as they could be read, through the veil of hair, expressed deep woe, and the veins of his neck swelled with the strength of his feelings. Here then follow the exact words of his petition, neither added to, nor diminished.

“ I was left with a motherless charge.

“ God help the motherless!

“ I was left with a child six days ould.

“ I am a desolate man, the Lord pity me !

“ It isn’t by the words of the mouth, I tell ye—look into my breast, an’ look at ache side o’ me !

“ I was left, for a space ov nine weeks, sick, an’ sore, an’ lone, in a small wilderness ov a cottage.

“ The mother o’ the childther was taken away a corpse from my side.

“ God in Heaven be merciful to the poor crature !

“ I had no friend in the wide world, to succour myself or my chilther.

“ The Lord look down on the desolate !

“ An’ I come to spake out my hard case, to the feelin’ hearts of the Christian people.

“ Good Christians, pity me !

“ Pity the motherless charge ! Pity the forlorn father ! Ah, do, worthy an’ tinther hearted servants o’ God !”

Not many hours after hearing this piece of pathetic eloquence, Neddy Fennell was again

prying into the secrets of Joan Flaherty's house. As nearly as possible the scene of the morning became repeated, under his eyes. Some question arose, concerning a morsel of bread, which the little girl had received during the day, as an alms. Indeed, while famishing with hunger, during their miserable perambulations, she had stealthily eaten it, and so, at present, it was not to be found in her little wallet. The protector of the motherless charge, seized, with his crippled hand, now again made quite straight, his dreaded cudgel, and began to belabour the poor child most heartily. But while so employed, a good lump of hardened clay, suddenly smiting him, on the side of the head, sent Robin Costigan staggering about the hovel; and ere he could recover from his astonishment and confusion, another missile of the same material, but of greater size and weight, followed its predecessor, and actually brought him down. With one dash of his hands, the beggarman drew

back to either side of his forehead and face their curtain of matted, grey locks, the better to enable him to discern his assailant; and while in the act of doing so, and while he yet lay prostrate, Neddy Fennell at length beheld, distorted by rage and ferocity, a face, which, to his dying day, he never forgot.

Their regards met. Neddy was now astride on the wall, kicking it with his heels as if it were a restive horse, which he spurred against a detested enemy; and his right arm was raised high, ready to discharge a third shot, and his very handsome boyish face glowed, and his brows frowned deeply over his flashing eyes as he shouted out, "Yes, Costigan—I'm the very boy that did it! and if you beat that little girl again, I'll pelt the brains out of your robber's scull!—take this over again for a warning."

The third bullet flew from his hands, but this time missed its billet. The next instant, the beggarman was on his feet; and before Neddy could re-arm himself, a swinging blow

from the cudgel, staggered him in his seat on the top of the old clay wall, which had supplied him with ammunition; while a tug at one of his legs, made almost simultaneously with the blow, fairly dropped him under her own roof, into Nelly Carty's arms, who had just returned from her day's quest.

"You misfortunate bit iv a boy," whispered Nelly, in great wrath and alarm, "d'ye want to get yourself an' all iv us murthered?"

She glanced towards the door, which she had left open. The beggarman came into them through it, as Neddy roared out louder than ever:—"I'll make the gallow's-bird stop beating that little girl!"

The cudgel whizzed over his head, just missing it. Had it taken effect, with half the strength exercised by the herculean arm that wielded it, the boy must have fallen dead on the spot. Nelly Carty pulling the hood of her cloak quite over her face, so as to hide her terror-stricken features as well as she could,

threw her arms round Neddy, standing between him and her old crony; Bridget Mulrooney sprang to her assistance; both women began to remonstrate and scold in their shrillest tones; their poor lodgers in the inner den, though not well knowing what was going forward, screamed violently; while the penny-whistle squeak of old Joan Flaherty's lungs chimed in from some corner of her own dwelling.

Still the intruder seemed bent on taking a fell revenge. He was tearing away the two potatoe-beggars from the boy, and his right hand and arm were gathering and knitting all their deadly strength for a better aimed blow of the cudgel, when another hand, and not a weak although an old one, collared him from behind, and Father Connell's voice, almost for the first time, breaking through its usual mild or grave cadence, demanded, while it overmastered all the hideous noises around him, the cause of the affray.

The expression of Costigan's face instantly

and completely changed. His set teeth widely separated—he gasped—his jaw dropped; the murderer’s cloud left his brow; and then he turned his head over his shoulder, to observe the features of the new comer; and after one look at them, twisted, not without an effort, out of the old priest’s gripe, the standing collar of his riding-coat, and hastily retreated through the yet open doorway.

It was a long time, before Father Connell could obtain any clear information, regarding the nature of the scene, he had just witnessed. Nelly Carty did not, by any means, wish to be candid. From Neddy Fennell he gained however, some useful evidence. He learned that the person that he had just seen, was the same he had once endeavoured to prepare for a felon’s death;—and again questioning Nelly Carty, still closely, and more authoritatively, she, with great wringing of her hands, was compelled to admit the fact. Neddy also fully explained the cause of the personal

quarrel, between himself and the formidable robber ; and although his priest sternly reprehended him, it was not difficult to perceive, that he almost excused the boy's act of aggression, for the motive that had prompted it. He passed into the next cabin, Neddy Fennell attending at his heels. The beggarman was not to be seen ; but he saw the three wretched children, and he pitied them. He questioned the girl. He asked where she came from ?—where she was born ?—she could not tell.—Who were her parents ?—she did not know ; but Darby Cooney—the name by which she had always known her tyrant—had often told her, while beating her, that she was no child of his ; though indeed, she had no remembrance of ever living with any one else but him. And the wicked boy had been given into her charge, about three years ago, and the infant a few months ago ; but where they came from, she could not tell, no more than if they had dropt down from the sky.

It was with great difficulty, that Father Connell obtained even this scanty information; and when she had concluded, the poor child, her cheeks streaming tears, earnestly stipulated that Darby Cooney might not be told, "she had informed on him."

"Och!" she added, her fears increasing into passion, "he would kill me stone dead, wi' the stick; och yes, he wouldn't lave a bit o' life in me."

Father Connell asked her some questions on religious points; she had scarce an idea on the subject. The good man then contemplated her and the other children, in silent commiseration and thoughtfulness. His little favourite crept to his side, venturing in whispers to plead for his young *protégée*, and to hope that he was now forgiven for having pelted the old robber from the top of the wall. Our parish priest seized his hand, and although he did not still speak a word, but only squeezed it again and again, Neddy was satisfied with the answer.

“ I will be here early to-morrow morning, Neddy, please God, to meet this Darby Cooney and to see what we can do for the poor children. Now I must go to your mother’s bed-side.”

After sitting a little while with Mrs. Fennell, her visitor informed her that better lodgings had been provided for her and her aunt, into which he would have them removed next morning. He then took his way homeward.

As usual, his little squire saw him safe through the mysteries of the potatoe-beggars’ town. Returning to his lodgings, Neddy perceived the door of Joan Flaherty’s abode still open, and ventured in. The girl stood up to meet him.

“ May a blessing be upon your road, good honest boy,” she said, “ for the pity you have to me ; no crature ever had pity for me afore.”

“ What is your name, poor little girl ?”

“ Mary Cooney.”

“ And you’re not the daughter of that rogue and rascal ?”

“ Sure he says himself, that I’m not, an’ sure if I was, he wouldn’t be so hard on me entirely.”

“ And why don’t you run away from him, and never go next or near him again ?”

“ Och ! och ! where in the world, could I go to ?”

“ I’ll give you half of my breakfast, and half of my dinner ; and when I’m a big man, and have money, as my father used to have, I’ll give you half of that, too.”

This very plausible and very practicable plan, seemed to open, for a moment, to the mind’s vision of the poor listener, a new and dazzling vista of hope and happiness. Her beautiful eyes glowed with momentary delight, and looked intently forward, as if she, even materially, enjoyed the fairy prospect. But suddenly all changed in that young face, and she moaned out.

Wresham, occasionally eyeing a prescription, continues:—

“ Ah Kit, what about the old friar and his bell?”

“ Aye Kit, my worthy,” echoed one of the sentinel wags, “ tell us about the friar and his *belle*—ha, ha, ha!”

And the ha, ha, ha! ran through the whole “ school”—for a sparkling and original witticism had been uttered.

“ Aye, joke away on it,” said Gaby Mac Neary,—“ but by Gog,—” and he banged his stick across Dick Wresham’s “ genteel” and delicate subterfuge, for a counter, “ you’ll soon have them friars devouring up the fat of the land again. Ha, ’tis’nt ould times with them now; the’re creeping out of their holes among us again,—an honest man can’t walk the streets without being jostled by one of them.”

“ And how devilish sleek the rascals look,” sputtered Jack Mac Carthy, knitting, wickedly, his awful, grey eyebrows.

“ Well, but Kit Hunter, tell us about Father Murphy,” commanded Dick Wresham impatiently.

“ Why, you must know, he has built a kind of a little steeple on the gable of his chapel, and hung up a small bell in it; and this he rings out for his mass, as sturdily as if there was no law to prevent it.”

“ Ho!” grunted Gaby Mac Neary, “ if that’s not popish impudence, the divil’s in the dice. Gog’s blug!” he continued in a kind of soliloquy, puckering his lips into a fierce snarl, as he stumped about the school-room, and punched his stick downwards at every step.

“ Well, Kit?” again asked Dick Wresham.

“ Well : the dean was made acquainted with the matter, and requested to use his authority, in having the bell taken down, and so he called on Father Murphy for the purpose. The friar, you know is a big, bluff kind of an ould fellow—and hah! he said to the dean—and can’t I have a bell to call my coachman,

and my groom, and my footmen, and all my other man servants, and ould Alley, the cook, to their dinners—eh?—ha!”

Some laughed at Kit Hunter’s anecdote; but Gaby Mac Neary, and Jack Mac Carthy, could only ejaculate their indignation, at such a piece of audacious papistry. Kit Hunter went on.

“You must take it down, my good sir,” said the dean.

“Take it down, is it, after all the trouble I had putting it up? Hu! hu! no, I won’t take it down; but if you want it so much, there it is—and you may climb up, and take it down yourself—hu! hu!”

“And what did the dean say to this?” demanded Gaby Mac Neary.

“Why he could say nothing at all farther, for, after pointing up at the bell, the friar walked off as fast as he could.”

Gaby and Jack now expressed a huger indignation than ever. Gaby, in particular,

though not feeling half of the real asperity experienced by his friend Jack, burst forth in his might. He imprecated, he cursed, and he swore, he bellowed as he stumped about; and “the vagabones!” he went on, “there isn’t a friar, no nor a priest of ’em, that I wouldn’t hunt out of the counthry, over again! why they’ll ride rough shod over us, as they did before, by Gog! They walk the very middle stone of the street already—*blur-an-ages!*”

“And here is one of them walking the middle stone of the street, this very moment,” reported one of the sentinels.

“Father Connell, no less—hat and wig, and all.” added the other.

“*Blug-a-bouns!*” roared Gaby Mac Neary, becoming almost lachrymose in his wrath—“hunt them out of the country, did I say? no, but hang ’em all up, sky high, *that* is what I meant to say!”

“He is on one of his begging expeditions to-

day," again reported the faithful vidette. "Look there is Con Loughnan, handling him a note, nothing less—"

Little Dickey Wresham raced to the door, thrust out his neck and head for a peep, and raced back again to his pestle and mortar. The sentinels at the door-way whispered together, and as Father Connell passed them, they saluted him very ceremoniously, and invited him to enter the school-room—he did so.

The persons among whom our parish priest now stood, seemed quite strangers to him. One of them, indeed, namely Gaby Mac Neary, he might have recognized in a different light, had he been able distinctly to observe him; but at his first appearance, Gaby had flung himself upon one of the black leather-bottom chairs, and twisted it and himself face-wise towards the wall.

Some of the other persons of the circle acted as follows. Kit Hunter prudently moved

backwards into the shade; Jack Mac Carthy tried to smile, but it was a hideous attempt—a vicious donkey might equal it; and Dick Wresham grinned most maliciously; while, for the purpose of disguising the venemous mirth, he pretended to use his teeth in assisting his fingers to tie up a paper of drugs.

It was surmised by one of the juvenile wittings, that Father Connell was out on a mission of charity. The old priest assented.

Particulars of the case of distress which at present interested him, were politely demanded. In the simplest and the fewest words possible he told his little tale of woe. Again he was solicited to name the parties, and he named them.

“Ah, yes, sir,” resumed the young “gentleman.” “I might have guessed that it was for one of the fair portion of the creation your reverence took so much trouble this cold day?”

“And indeed it is to the credit of clergymen

in general that they are such champions of the weaker sex," resumed his comrade.

"I remember the little Widow Fennell right well," quoth Dick Wresham, "and a plump little bit of flesh she was, and must be to the present hour."

At these words, to the surprise of all who caught the action, Gaby Mac Neary suddenly turned his head over the back of his chair, and scouled very angrily at the speaker.

"There certainly is some satisfaction, in bestowing charity, on such a pretty little widow," continued the chief sentinel—"one of her smiles, is good value for a guinea, any day—" and he took out of his waistcoat pocket, a glittering coin, and with a face of much earnestness, placed it on the priest's palm and closed the old man's fingers upon it.

Father Connell glanced, however, at the offering, and then reclosed his fingers upon it himself. The waggery and the sparkling wit went forward.

“ By my oath and conscience,” said the really spiteful Jack Mac Carthy, “ I’d give a leg of mutton and ‘thrimmins’ to any one that ud tache me the knack of making friends among the women, as the priests do.”

“ Why, Father Connell might give you an insight,” said another, “ but nothing for nothing all the world over; no money, no pather-nos-ther—eh, Father Connell?”

Gaby Mac Neary did not now look round, but he seemed to grow very uneasy or very hot on his chair.

“ Father Connell is a spruce ould buck,” cried little Dicky Wresham “ and there is no wonder that the women should be friendly to him.”

“ But how does he make the hat and wig go down with them?” resumed the brutal Jack Mac Carthy.

“ *Blur-an-ages-an-by-Gog!*” exploded Gaby Mac Neary, jumping up at the same time, and jostling forward to where Father Connell stood

—"and," he continued during his progress, "and every kind of sweet damnation seize upon my soul, if I can stand it any longer, or if I *will* stand it any longer!—give me your hand Father Connell—how do you do, sir?"

Father Connell did as he was bid, standing somewhat aghast, however, at the roaring approach of such a forty-horse oath engine.

"Why, what are you at now, Gaby?" asked the principal hoaxer—"you that swore, as no other man can swear, but you,—a little while ago, that you'd hang every rascally priest of them, sky high."

"You lie, you whelp!" answered Gaby, "I never swore, nor said any such thing, you young rascal! and you're all nothing but a pack of rascals—nothing else—to bring this good hearted ould gentlemen in here, to scoff at him, and to insult him."

"Well done, Gaby," shouted the second hoaxer, and he slapped old Gaby on the shoulder.

“Do that again, ye *kout*,* and I’ll dust your puppy’s jacket, while a dusting is good for it or you!” and he flourished his stick about him, at a rate that made his old friends jump out of his way; while the only object he hit was, the hat of the very person whose champion he now was, and this, with the violence of his unintended blow, flew some distance off its accustomed resting place. But Gaby soon picked it up, replaced it on the apex of the wig, and then slapped it down, with a force that betokened in his own fitting apprehension, much friendly energy, and a liberal promise of chivalrous protection towards the wearer.

“Come away, Father Connell, out of this blackguard place,” he went on, passing the priest’s arm through his, “come along, sir, come along I tell you!”

“My dear,” said Father Connell, laying his hand on the arm of his doughty defender

* A mean chap.

“do not get angry, do not curse or swear on my account; these gentlemen have done me no harm; I wish I could say they had done themselves any good; nor have they been as successful in ridiculing me as they think; neither my years, now nearly four score, nor my hat and wig have made me so very stupid as they suppose. As for the witty young gentleman who gave me this,” and he held out the counterfeit guinea on his open palm, and then allowed it to drop on the floor at his foot—“I won’t say God reward him, no, no;” the old man shook his head, touched the brim of his hat, and looked upward—“the reward, if my poor prayer were heard, might be in proportion to the gift; but I can, and I do say—God forgive him.”

“Hah! take that, you dirty curs!” triumphed Gaby Mac Neary, as he and Father Connell turned into the street.

To the great surprise of the whole town, the pair were in a few minutes after seen parading

the streets, arm in arm, and begging of every one they mutually knew, a donation for the poor Fennells. Protestant and Catholic looked after them as they marched along ; and, agreeing in opinion, for at least, once in their lives, sagely remarked, that “ wonders would never cease.”

In the heat of his charitable enthusiasm,—as much, one may venture to say, as in the heat of his wrath, against Dick Wresham’s “ dirty curs—” Gaby’s own contribution, to Father Connell’s list, was large, almost out of character. But this was not all. He led him to his own house, and there “ made much of him ;” and over a hearty luncheon, and a glass of good wine, Gaby Mac Neary requested and obtained a minute account of the former and the present situation of the poor family for whom he sought relief.

To every word the old priest uttered, Gaby’s only daughter was an attentive listener. This little girl may be called very lovely—very, very

lovely. Her age was not more than ten years. No description of her face or person is about to follow; but it is asserted over again that little Helen Mac Neary was very, very lovely, and bright, laughing, joyous—a very sun-burst of beauty, flashing over the freshness of life's almost break of day.

During the priest's statements, however, little Helen showed none of her usual brilliant joyousness. Her features became gently sorrowful, and tears started from her eyes. Father Connell took leave of his new friend. At the door of the house he felt his jock pulled, and turning round, he saw this beautiful little being looking up earnestly at him, and moving her fingers in a mute request that he might bend down to her. He laid his open palm upon her shining hair—of the same color, by the way, as that of the poor little beggar girl—gazed in smiles, for a space, upon her glowing, up-turned features; and muttered involuntarily—“may the Lord bless you, my little angel.”

She beckoned to him again, and he bent his ear to her lips.

“ I got this for a Christmas box,” she whispered, sliding half-a-guinea into his hand—“ but will you give it, sir, along with the rest you have, to poor Mrs. Fennell, and her old aunt, and to poor little Neddy?—Oh, you’re hurting me, sir!” she suddenly cried out, pained by Father Connell’s ardent pressure of both her tiny hands in his. He relaxed his unconscious clasp; but still held her tightly, and he still gazed at her, his lips working to keep in his emotion.

“ Helen, Helen! where are you, girl?” bel-
lowed out her father, descending the staircase.

“ Good bye to you, sir,” she continued, again endeavouring to extricate her fingers.

“ *Blug-a-bouns!* what’s all this?” questioned her father, making his appearance.

“ Your little daughter,” answered Father Connell, “ is a blessed child. She is beautiful to look upon; but her fresh, young heart is

more beautiful still. See—she has given me for the poor widow, what was bestowed upon her, these happy Christmas times, to buy play-things and sweet things—and she is only a little girl still,”—he inclined his head, and laid his cheek to Helen’s—“ I thought at first of giving back her little gift ;—and I thought too of bestowing upon her, a Christmas box, and a good one, out of my own pocket ; but I won’t do either.”

“ Don’t don’t,” roared Gaby Mac Neary, half crying, “ *blug-an-ages !*”

“ No : I will not ; no my child I will not, I’ll leave it in the hands of your God, to repay you for your charity. Here, sir,—take your little daughter to you, and kiss her, and be proud of her.” He took up the child, placed her in her father’s arms, and left the house.

CHAPTER XII.

YET another school-house is to be visited, and it will make the third presented in these pages. But monotony need not, therefore, be apprehended; for if Dick Wresham's school has been found unlike Father Connell's school—and there is little doubt but it has—that which must now be described will prove unlike either.

And the “main street,” is again to be recurred to. Jammed in between two mere modern houses, with shop windows, there was in it a curious old structure, or rather a succession of very curious old structures, situated to the rear of this introductory one. It had a high, parapeted front, over which arose a gable, very

sharp angled at top, and surmounted by a tall, roundish, stone chimney.

A semicircular archway, gained by a few steps, ran through it from the street, and led into a small quadrangle, one side of which was formed by its own back, and the other three sides by similar old buildings; that side to your left being partially dilapidated. A second semicircular archway passed under the pile confronting you, as you entered the enclosure from the street, and gave egress into a second, but larger quadrangle. Of this, the far or top side was composed of one range of an old edifice, still ; that behind you of the rear of the house that fronted you, in the lesser quadrangle, that to your right, of other ancient buildings, entirely ruinous ; and that to your left, partly of a dead wall, partly of a shed, before which was a bench of mason-work, and partly of a little nook, containing some evergreens, and remarkable for affording place to a queer sentry-box kind of structure, built of solid stone.

And now there was yet a third archway before you, but much narrower than the others, and very much darker, boring its way under the lower part of the structure facing you. In traversing it, your eye caught, to your right hand, doorways imperfectly filled up by old oak doors, half hanging off their old-time's hinges, and leading into large, unoccupied, coal black chambers; and when you emerged from it, the cheery daylight was again around you, in a third enclosed space, of which the most remarkable feature was a long flight of wide stone steps, terminating in a sharply arched door, which led into an elevated garden.

Why dwell on the features of the odd old place? Has no one guessed? Here, Father Connell put his adopted son to school. Here was the scene of years of that boy's pains and pleasures, sports and tasks, tears and laughter—likings and dislikings—friendships,—nay, of a stronger and a higher passion, which though conceived in mere boyhood, passed into his youthful prime, and afterwards swayed

and shaped the fate, not only of himself, but alas! of his aged protector.

All the nooks and corners of the odd, old place, were all, all the play grounds of him, and his school-fellows. He will stop to this day, before the streetward archway, and look into the two quadrangles, until recollected pleasure becomes present pain. For as he looks, his mind's eye sees, flitting and jumping through the sunshine and the shade, with which they are chequered, the features and forms of those early mates; and his ears seem to hear their shouts, and their shrill untirable gabble; until anon, he seems to distinguish the very accents of their voices, and even by that, knows them from each other; and at last they pipe out his own name, and he is sure, what boys from time to time utter it! And then, turning away from the old archway, he asks himself — what days have since been like the days which his passing vision has just given him back? What hour of satiated passion, what hour of worldly success, has been worth

one minute of the passionless, thoughtless pleasures, experienced within the intricacies and the quaintnesses of the odd, old place?

And, as he plods along the streets of his native town, other questions and recollections come upon him. He calls to mind some of his fancies; for instance, of the kind of old people, who must originally have inhabited the jumble of old structures;—who were they? What did they there? What did they look like? How were they dressed? He did not know a bit at that time; still he used to imagine them clad in long robes of black or dark grey, silently moving about their then silent little squares, or sitting stock still on the bench in the larger one; or gliding, (not walking,) up the long flight of stone steps to their primitive garden; (and what in the world used to grow in that garden?) or, mysteriously vanishing into the large, black chambers, to be found to the right of the third archway.

And the imps his fancy has just seen! Their progress from childhood, or boyhood, into man-

hood! But Ned Fennell will insist upon this topic more at length in another place. For the passing instant, he can do little else than boast of all his old haunts of play and frolic.

In the middle of the inner quadrangle, there used to be a roundish space, quite smooth, and well sanded over, while the rest of the yard around it was roughly paved—and could human foresight have contrived anything more appropriate for the marble ring, and the peg-top ring? In “hide and seek,” where could the appointed seeker find such a retreat as the old stone sentry-box—the boys called it an old confessional—in which to turn away his head and eyes, until the other urchins should have concealed themselves among some of the fantastic recesses around them? And where could leap-frog be played so well, as under the old archways?—and if a sudden shower came on, how conveniently they afforded shelter from it! To such of the boys as had courage for the undertaking, what places above ground, ay, or under ground, so fit for enacting “the ghost.”

as were the pandemonium retreats of the black chambers of the third archway? Was there ever so luxurious a seat for a tired boy to cast himself upon, fanning his scarletted face with his hat, as that offered to him by the bench in the larger quadrangle, canopied over head by its two umbrageous sycamores, one at its either end? Or, if a poor boy happened to play too much, and too long, and were summoned up to his task, without having conned a single word of it, what crumbling old walls under the sun could compare with those at the opposite side of the square, for supplying in perfection, a weed called—locally at least—“ Peniterry,” to which the suddenly terrified idler might run in his need, grasping it hard, and threateningly, and repeating the following “ words of power:”

“ Peniterry, peniterry, that grows by the wall,
Save me from a whipping, or I pull you roots and all.”

And there was a third sycamore, in a corner belonging to a thrush, who, from year to year

built her nest, and brought forth her young in it, and she was the best fed thrush in the world. Her nest lay almost on a level with one of the school-room windows—you could nearly touch her, by stretching out your arm from it—and outside this window projected a broken slate, constantly kept filled with various kinds of provisions, for her and her family. Her husband seemed to grow lazy under these circumstances. He would scarce ever leave home in quest of food, and, indeed, do little else than perch upon the very topmost bough over her head, and whistle to her all day long. As for herself, she seemed, out of her trustiness in her little purveyors, to live in a delightful state of happy quietude. Not a bit startled was she, or even put out, by all their whoopings and uproar in the yard below. Nay—she seemed to take a matronly interest in their studies too; for the boys of the head class, during school hours, could plainly see her, sitting on her eggs, while they sat to their

books or slates, and they would fancy that her little, round, diamonded eye, used to be watching them.

Well. The old house confronting you, as you entered the first quadrangle, from the street, and the rear of which looked into the second quadrangle, was the old school-house. Passing its sharply arched doorway of stone, you entered a hall, floored with old black oak, and ascended a spiral staircase of black oak, coiling round an upright of black oak, and stepped into the school-room, floored with black oak, and divided by a thick partition of black oak from the master's bed-chamber; in fact, all the partitions, all the doors, all the stairs, all the cieling beams—and ponderous things they were—down stairs, and up stairs, through the interior of the crude old edifice, were all, all old black oak, old black oak, nearly as hard as flint, and seemingly rough from the hatchet, too; and the same was the case in the interiors of the other inhabitable portions of the concatenation of ancient buildings.

Through the partition separating his bed-chamber from the school-room the head of the seminary had bored a good many holes, nearly an inch in diameter, some straight forward, some slantingly, to enable himself to peer into every corner of the study, before entering it each morning; and this is to be kept in mind. At either end of the long apartment was a large square window, framed with stone, and, indeed, stone also in its principal divisions. Over head ran the enormous beams of old oak, and in the spaces between them were monotonous flights, all in a row, and equally distant from each other, of monotonous angels, in stucco—the usual children's heads, with goose wings shooting from under their ears; and sometimes one or two of these angels became fallen angels, flapping down, on clipt wings, either upon the middle of the floor, or else upon the boys' heads, as they sat to their desks, and confusing them, and their books, and slates with fragments of stucco and mortar, rotten laths, and rusty nails.

In a kind of recess, on the side of the school-room opposite to the boy's double desks, was an old table, flanked by a form, to which, at certain hours of the day, sat some half dozen young girls, from six to ten years, who came up from the quaint old parlour below, under the care of the master's daughter, who therein superintended their education in inferior matters, to be occasionally delivered into his hands for more excelling instruction.

The principal of this celebrated seminary wrote himself down in full, and in a precise, round hand, James Charles Buchmahon; and his establishment as "the English Academy:"—principal, we have called him—despotic monarch, we should have called him; for he never had had more than one assistant, and the head of that one he broke before they had been many weeks together.

And never were absolute monarchy, and deep searching scrutiny, more distinctly stamped and carved on any countenance, than upon that of James Charles Buchmahon, master of the

English Academy. And that countenance was long and of a soiled sallow colour; and the puckering of his brows and eye-lids awful; and the unblinking steadiness of his blueish grey eyes insufferable; and the cold blooded resoluteness of his marbly lips unrelaxable. At the time we speak of him, James Charles Buchmahon might have been between fifty and sixty, but he wore well. He was tall, with a good figure and remarkably well turned limbs. "and he had the gift to know it," for in order not to hide a point of the beauty of those limbs from the world, he always arrayed them in very tight fitting pantaloons, which reached down to his ankles. His coat and waistcoat were invariably black. A very small white muslin cravat, and a frill sticking out quite straight from his breast, occupied the space from his chin to his waist. And James Charles Buchmahon's hat was of cream colour beaver, high crowned, and broad brimmed: and he ever carried either a formidable walking stick of stout oak, or else a substitute for it, made of

five or six peeled switches, cunningly twisted together, and at one end loaded with lead.

It has been hinted that Ned Fennell has promised us some further notice of a few of his former playmates; the subjects over whom, in common with himself, the master of the English Academy held sway; and this is the place into which again in the teeth of our critical remonstrances he beseechingly insists to be permitted to introduce his little living picture gallery. It is not quite waywardness, he says, which induces him to be so pertinacious. Admitting some yearning, for mere feeling's sake, to reproduce and record characters, once either dear or interesting to him, Ned will have it, that he can prove, by his faithful portraiture of their early bent, and its similarity with their eventual fortunes or fate, how true it is, that the sapling contains the full grown tree:—that “the child is father to the man.”

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST, then, Ned presents his friend James Graham, his old, old friend—even to this very blessed day and hour, his old friend.

James was an English boy—a curiosity of course to the whole school; a small-boned, wiry little fellow, and not remarkable for first-rate talent. But he was remarkable for, perhaps, a still better kind of talent—that, namely, of untiring industry and application, which, in the end, enabled him to sweep out of his way all scholastic difficulties. And even in those early days of his life, James Graham had prudence

and foresight, aye, and thrift enough, for forty years of age. In everything that concerned him he went steadily on, looking neither to the right nor to the left, by the shortest road to his object. After school was dismissed, and when almost every other boy loitered to play, James would race home, as fast as he could, to con his tasks for the following morning; and sometimes, to be sure, some of his classmates, after having worked for the purpose, like mill horses, an hour or so, would succeed in putting him down in his class; but, after that, it behoved them to be watchful and continuously industrious; for if they were not, little lank James Graham, who was always watchful, always industrious, and always prepared, would be sure to step up again. James's father resided in the country; while he boarded and lodged in a humble, respectable family, in the town. He was allowed a certain weekly sum for what his friends considered necessary expenses, apart from his boarding and lodging.

But out of this sum, limited, of course, as it was, James contrived to save money for the future—absolutely for the future, almost in the full meaning of the word. Partly in the following manner.

Pending from small nails inside his trunk—Ned Fennell often saw the arrangement—were little cotton bags, one containing half-pence, another penny-pieces, another five-penny silver pieces, another ten-penny silver pieces, another half-crowns, another whole crowns, and the last golden guineas, or else pound notes. And when his half-pence amounted to penny-pieces, he would transfer them in that shape to the next little bag ; and when that contained something above five-penny pieces he would confirm them into the smallest silver coin : and so, on and on he went in rotation, through all his little satchels, until finally half-pence, &c., &c., merged into the guinea, or the pound note.

But though thus saving, he did not board

like a miser,—a title given to him, by commonplace observers at school; whose chance pence used to “burn their pockets,” as they themselves admitted, until they threw them away upon the purchase of some unnecessary toy, or sweet thing. From James’ wealth first resulted a full though miniature library of “the British classics;” and having since carried into more active life, and even into the mighty competition of the city of cities, matured and confirmed, his early school-boy characteristics, it is many years since he has reaped the solid advantages which, when almost a child, they assuredly promised to him.

“Dear James!” adds Ned Fennell, “I do not yet well know why so perfect a character as yourself ever could like, or love a harum-scarum fellow, like what I then was; and yet you did—and some of my school cronies, along with me; aye, and often made us the better of your little pocket library too. To be sure they and I always used to fight your boxing

battles for you, at any odds against all your gibing or cowardly assailants; and though you were not a frolicsome boy, you were a mirthful one; and at last, we could often make you laugh heartily, in your queer, English way, at our queer Irish fun—aye, and now and then join in it too, under sufficient protection; for your frame, dear James, was not strong enough for all the haps of school-boy adventure and warfare; still I do not know how it was, that you loved us, and to this day do love us so well; except indeed, my conjecture be right, that your good nature was equal to your other good qualities.”

George Booth very little resembled James Graham. He was the biggest and tallest boy in the school. In fact he was eighteen or nineteen—and quite a giant compared with every other boy around him. Yet he never could acquire enough to entitle him to a place in the head class, and so was always a member of some inferior one, where he towered above

his compeers—very little fellows indeed—like Gulliver among the Lilliputians. Still it was in stature only that he surpassed even these—aye, or even equalled them. He was always at the tail of his class—or, as the little people termed it, “Paddy last,” and as matter of consequence, George Booth wore, nearly from morning to night, the idler’s cap—a curious head-gear enough, and of such a height, as to make George seem nearly twice as tall as he really was.

But all this seemed to give George very little trouble. Day after day, he bore, with a stolid, unwincing endurance, his coronation as monarch of dunces, and the sore humiliations, scoffs, and insults, resulting therefrom. In fact, he seemed to have made up his mind, that he had been sent to school, for the purpose and for no other of wearing the idler’s cap; and as he plodded home, every evening, George used to be heavily good-humoured and jocose, in his own peculiar way, as if he felt convinced,

that he had gone through his day's duty with consistent credit to himself.

Before school broke up, each day, all who could tack words of two syllables together, stood in a semicircle round the room, first, second, third, or fourth classes as it might be. Upon these occasions, if a boy of an inferior class, spelt correctly a word, which his neighbour in a higher one had "missed," James Charles Buchmahon's discipline, to meet the case, was rather singular. As no member of the third class suppose, could take the place of one of the second class, he was entitled as an equivalent triumph, over the dunce of the moment, to seize his nose between his right finger and thumb, and so lead him round the school-room. Now, it may be believed, that George Booth, very often, subjected his organ of smell, to such vile usage. But in the contrivances of the little fellow—scarce higher than George's knee—to lay hold on George's nose, much of the interest of the scene consisted. From some

oiliness of surface, or else fleshy elasticity, peculiar to it, the feature was very slippery, so that when the tiny boy, helped by a good jump upwards, succeeded in catching it, it would slip, over and over, through his fingers, until James Charles Buchmahon, to end the proceeding, would, in the calmest but most authoritative tone, direct George Booth, to bend himself half double, so as that his countenance might come within reach of the pigmy aspirant : and George would quietly obey, and then be led about, amid the laughter and shouts of all the lookers on ; and yet, when he was again allowed to stand upright in his class, neither shame, nor sorrow, nor excitement could be traced in his pale, fat countenance. And so far George's character seemed legible enough. Blockheadism and insensibility to disgrace very fairly go together. But there were some points about him which no human being, not even James Charles Buchmahon could comprehend : certain dull, muddy, and it must have been

unintended quiddities, labouring, like asthmatic lungs, in the recesses of his brain—or rather of whatever it was, which stood in the place of brains to him. For instance, he would now and then be imaginative, forsooth; but we cannot venture, no more than James Charles Buchmahon could, to define these precious portions of George's mental existence, or consciousness. An illustration of them, in facts, shall, however, be attempted.

As if beginning to grow a little tired of performing his daily duty, under the edifice of the idler's cap, George, one sunny autumn morning, after breakfast, took a stroll into the country, instead of going back, to the English Academy; and all that day he was not to be heard of until hunger at last drove him home to his father's house.

And next day, he took his place as "Paddy last" in his class, apparently as undisturbed as if there were no reckoning in store for him; or as if there had been in existence no such man as

James Charles Buchmahon, master of the English Academy; and for a time George seemed perfectly right.

A good portion of the day wore on, George sat looking down on his book, his mouth, as well as his eyes, wide open, as if he were wondering at some crabbed Chinese manuscript. James Charles Buchmahon after hearing many classes in rotation, stood, according to invariable custom, before his magisterial desk, scraping, and paring, and splitting, and nibbing pens, and placing them in most formal rows upon its outer ledge. The boys were all engaged, or seemingly so, in conning fresh tasks, until the pens should be quite ready to enable them to engage in writing their copies. During his progress of scraping and so on, James Charles Buchmahon, looking over his spectacles, and under his eyebrows, sent his searching glances round and round the room, nay, from each individual boy to the other. There was almost dead silence, as was usual in the school-room at this

time every day, when the words "George Booth," pronounced, in the slowest, and most deep and solemn manner, by James Charles Buchmahon, sounded through the stilly school-room. George Booth looked in the well known direction of the summoner—his miserable features suddenly jerking themselves, as it were, from their expression of inane stupidity into contortions and twistings of a horrible kind: and his terrified glance informed him that the fore finger of a certain right hand was slowly beckoning him up to the judgment seat. The fore-doomed wretch arose and advanced—now gulping down something, every other instant, as if he were vainly endeavouring to swallow back again, the sickening fears that bubbled up from his heart.

"George Booth, you were yesterday absent from the English Academy."

"Yes, sir," (gulp.)

"And pray where did you spend the day, George Booth?"

“ In Sir John’s wood, sir, picking nuts.”

“ Humph !” James Charles Buchmahon interrupted himself, in his process of mending the pens, and stared straight forward, into poor George’s blinking, pig’s eyes, as if seriously endeavouring to make him out. The conference was resumed.

“ Very good. And pray, Mr. George Booth, at whose suggestion, did you go to Sir John’s wood, to pick nuts ?”

“ At—” (a great gulp—another, and another) at Satan’s, sir.”

“ At whose ?”

“ Satan’s sir.”

James Charles Buchmahon now laid down the pen-knife, and placed the pen beside it, and there was another look into George’s eyes, and through and through them, until it could almost be seen coming out at the back of his scull.

“ Satan’s, you say, sir ?”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Will you be good enough, Mister George Booth, to say also in what manner Satan and you happened to interchange words on the subject ?”

“ Sir ?”

“ Where did you meet Satan, Mr. George Booth.”

“ I saw him, sir, up—” George became at fault, and swallowed the air more violently than ever.

“ Up where, pray ?”

“ Up—up in the clouds, sir—at the top of Meeting-House Lane,” the lane that led directly from his own street into the country.

“ Very good, again, sir. And pray what kind of person is Satan ?”

“ He’s—just—about your size, sir,” and George bobbed his head, as if the confession he had made required something like an apologetic bow ; while James Charles Buchmahon deliberately raised his cream coloured hat from his head, bowed very formally and politely in turn, and then replaced his beaver. But

oh ! even George Booth could comprehend that this excessive politeness boded him no good.

“ Well sir, about my size, you say : will you please to favor me with a more detailed description ? Was there any further likeness ? ”

“ No, sir,” George hastened to aver—“ No —’pon my word and credit, sir ! ”

“ Well, sir—go on with your description.”

“ He was black, sir—and he had horns and the tail, sir—and he had hoofs on him, sir, instead of shoes.”

“ I—see. Well, what words did he address to you ? ”

“ George, says he ”—(gulp.)

“ Well, sir.”

“ George, says he, don’t go to school to the English Academy to-day, says he.”

“ Well.”

“ But go out to Sir John’s wood, says he, and pick nuts, says he—there’s the best nuts in the whole country there, says he.”

“ Any other conversation between you, sir ? ”

“ No, sir.”

During the last part of the catechism, James Charles Buchmahon had advanced a step, and now, with one blow, the unhappy being was stretched at full length upon the old oaken floor, which shook under him, as he roared like a bull calf.

This was, indeed, an unusual proceeding on the part of the systematic master of the English Academy, but it will be recollected that there was no boy in the school of sufficient years or strength to bear George Booth's weight upon his shoulders, so that George might have had the advantage of receiving ideas from the fangs of the cat-o'-nine-tails; while in the apprehension—or rather in the momentary fancy of James Charles Buchmahon, for, to this hour, even he has not been able to arrive at certainty upon the point—some punishment became indispensable for George's attempt to enact the mere idiot.

And George Booth, from that day to this,

through all the progress and changes of advanced life, has remained "last in his class," and seems quite satisfied with his position.

It is to be added, however, that very, very strange to say, after having become married, and after having swelled into a truly Falstaff shape, George, at the appointment of his wife, has turned schoolmaster himself; for she keeps a seminary, in which children are taught the first rude combinations of their alphabet: and he perhaps feels a re-acting pleasure in exercising his late-come power of torturing the poor little animals into a comprehension of a process which he himself could never understand.

Tommy Palmer comes next; he is called Tommy rather than Thomas, because he had been always so called in the old school-house, the sound of the word seeming more expressive of his character.

Tommy can scarce be recollected, as racing about at play hour, with the general throng, or as ever joining in a game of ball, of top, or of

marbles. Neither was he ever at the head of his class, though by no means often at the tail of it. And yet he did not want power of body or of intellect, either for play or for study; he was only always ashamed of trying to compete with anybody in anything. *Mauvaise honte*, was the devil that beset him. He would blush suddenly, to the very top of his forehead, if abruptly spoken to, on the most indifferent subject; and if once he made a slip, in repeating his lesson, Tommy became so confounded, that any attempt to mend the matter, only plunged him, head over ears into the most helpless state of confusion.

Once, while standing up in his class, Tommy was reading the anecdote, in Sterne's Sentimental Journey, which gives an account of a French peasant's supper, and of a succeeding dance, before engaging in which, the young people took off their "*sabots* or wooden shoes." Tom read out very distinctly, "their *sabots*, or wooden dishes."

"Wooden wha-at?" questioned James Charles Buchmahon.

"Wooden dishes, sir," repeated Tommy Palmer.

"Look at it if you please, dearee." Tommy knew, as so did all the other boys, that the term "dearee," meant anything on earth but kindness.

But he looked on the book, with the most intense anxiety, while James Charles looked at him, with the full power of his large, frozen, blue eye.

"Well—dearee?"

"Wooden dishes," again read out poor Tommy Palmer.

"Open your eyes, pet, and try it again."

Taking the command literally, he elevated his eyebrows to their utmost stretch, and strained his eyes till their balls seemed ready to fall out; still, he could absolutely *see* nothing on the page, but wooden dishes. James Charles Buchmahon advanced with the cat-o'-

nine tails, and the poor fellow felt her claws on the backs of his hands, on his head, and about his legs; still and still, “ wooden shoes,” as plain as the printer could print the words, were, to his vision, nothing but “ wooden dishes.”

Many years afterwards, Tommy Palmer was met by an old school-fellow in the throng of the great metropolis. His father had procured for him a situation in a government office. His old friend encountered him amid the roar and clatter of Fleet street, and cordially and suddenly addressed him, holding out his hand. Tommy stepped back; staring, blushing, stammering, and wringing his fingers. In fact, to London he had carried, — that excellent market for disposing of it—his whole stock of *mauvaise honte*, being about twenty-five years of age, at that time; and, in his new position, on he went, blushing and stammering, and calling “ wooden shoes,” “ wooden dishes,” until, although no dunce, he was returned on his father’s hands, with the cha-

racter of having been found unfit for the discharge of a duty which any dunce could have got through.

Mick Hanlon was, at thirteen, the bully of the school,—but nothing else. Not that he wanted capacity for obtaining scholastic distinction, but that his ambition always aimed at the “bad eminence,” surrendered to him. He was a boy of low stature for his years, with a fierce eye, a fleshy, out-curved, defying lip, and a manner always overbearing. His shoulders were broad enough for a person six inches taller ; his arms long, and his nether limbs muscular and hard. In running, in leaping, in wrestling, in boxing, Mick had no rival.—Except a few who kept aloof from him, he brought every boy in the school to acknowledge his absolute supremacy, and his slaves submitted to him, in mingled terror, and admiration. Having thrashed into submission any one who dared to dispute his rule, he would next thrash, just as soundly, any

other one who even presumed "to look crooked" at his newly made vassal.

Such was Mick, at thirteen. At about two-and-twenty, after having, on a St. Patrick's day, "in the evening," overwhelmed, at the head of a gang of youthful worshippers of the saint, the whole city constabulary, who were about the streets, to keep peace and order. Mick next charged a guard of soldiers, who were coming to supply their place, and died on the point of one of their bayonets—the weapon, in his tiger spring forward and upward, having directly entered the young bravo's heart.

And there was Joe White, who, when directed, in common with his classmates, to tack two lines of poetry, to the end of a prose theme, produced, after days of effort—

"Joe White, my hand and pen,
Will be good, but God knows when."

And Joe died, prematurely, an ensign in a

militia regiment—the butt and the sot of its mess.

And upon the same occasion, Joe's constant crony, John Arran, rivalled him in a distich—

“ Sticks and stones,
And dead men's bones.”

And John, refusing to be sent to college, and afterwards placed in a liberal profession, upon leaving the English Academy, is now, only a hosier—and a hosier of no great parts either.

It may be added, that a third aspirant for the poetic wreath, Keeran Fitzgerald, who would be original, produced the following admirable couplet—

“ It's a very fine thing, for a boy to follow,
The tune of the harp, that's played by Apollo.”

And that Keeran, during his whole life afterwards, was indeed, very original in every

respect, with, however, about as much claim to eminence, or common sense, in his originality, as may be found in the lines, for which posterity are indebted to him alone.

And in the English Academy, there were two or three very dirty fellows—dirty in their persons and attire, as well as in their minds and sensations—dirty fellows inside as well as outside;—and dirty fellows of exactly the same description they continue to be to this very hour.

And mean boys, that have only grown into mean middle-aged men. And generous boys, who at five-and-forty, are still generous. And gentlemanlike boys, who through their whole after lives, have always been gentlemanly. And all the boys who were “Paddy lasts” in the English Academy, are “Paddy lasts” in the world. And the great majority of its pupils were content with middle places in their class—and farther than middle places, they never have got into in society.

And very few indeed, of all that miniature crowd, struck out for real fame or eminence in any way—but it is a grateful and a gracious duty to add, that they who did so, in verity and from the heart, have since reached the smiling shore, of their boyhood's ambition ; not one of them, at all events, has been drowned in his bold struggle, to attain it.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOMETIMES, even the redoubtable James Charles Buchmahon, master of the English Academy, used to indulge in a social glass, after dinner, nay, after supper too, with a few select friends; and the following day, was sure to remain longer than was his wont, in his bed-chamber. By some means or other, the young gentlemen of his seminary were scarcely ever ignorant of the recurrences of such evenings; and consequently, for an hour or so, upon the mornings that succeeded them, the school-room of the English Academy used to be very unusually relaxed in

discipline. It was, indeed, rather a venturesome thing, even with the temptation mentioned, to utter a loud breath, or for a moment vacate a seat, when, as will be remembered, the young students were divided, from the awful bedroom, by an oak plank, solely; to say nothing of the spy-holes, which James Charles Buchmahon had bored through the old partition.

It is evident, however, to the meanest capacity—and even George Booth quite understood the matter—that if the spy-holes were good, for the master's *espionage*, upon the boys, they were just as good, for the *espionage* of the boys upon the master—and, indeed, they were as often used one way as the other. Almost every morning in the year, reconnoitering parties were appointed, from the first and second classes, who, with the help of those spy-holes, and their own eyes, telegraphed through the school, the most minute proceeding of James Charles, from the instant he gave the first stir in his bed, until he laid his hand on the door-handle,

to pass out to begin his duties for the day; and it need not be added, that upon the especial occasions of stolen enjoyment alluded to, our young acquaintances were most particularly watchful.

It is, then, one of these half-holiday mornings, before breakfast. The school abounds with fun and gambol, Neddy Fennell being one of the greatest, if not the very greatest truant among all his compeers. James Charles has been sleeping later than ever was known before; and his subjects, believing that he must have been very drunk indeed the previous night, happily conjecture that he may not waken time enough for the morning lessons—nay, nor for the afternoon lessons—nay, that under Providence he may never waken at all.

But a change soon occurred in Neddy Fennell's sportive idling.

Mention has been made of some very dirty fellows in the English Academy. They were in their own way jocose fellows, too, particu-

larly upon this memorable morning. They had prepared a little blank paper book, and written upon upon each of its pages words that betokened, they said, a future fortune, of some kind or other, to any or everybody who, by insinuating a pin between two of its leaves, should cause the mystic volume to unfold. The device was not a very original one in the school; and when practised by boys of anything like neatness of mind, produced much harmless fun. But in their hands the simple plaything, from the nature of the matter they had scribbled through it, degenerated, of course, merely into a vehicle of nastiness.

Neddy Fennell passed them after they had just offended, aye, and abashed to the very crown of his head, Tommy Palmer, by inducing him to read his future destiny; our little friend could also see that James Graham's eyes were fixed on the dirty fellows with deep indignation. They enjoyed, however, the success of their joint invention in fits of smothered

laughter; and he overheard them arrange to have "rare sport" among the girls at the other side of the room, so soon as they should come up from the parlour to receive their morning lessons, at the hands of James Charles Buchmahon. He started, reddened, and said—"I'll try my fortune too."

They held the book of prophecy to him. He divided its leaves in the usual manner and read something very like what he had expected. He turned over some more of its leaves, and became satisfied of the nature of all its contents. Just then, the young girls entered the school-room, chaperoned by their mistress, as far as the door. Neddy glanced towards one of the little troop, and his blood boiled.

"You shall never take this fortune-book to the other side of the room, you blackguards," said Neddy.

"An' who'll hinder us?" asked they.

"I'll hinder you," he replied, and he put the book into one of the side pockets of his jacket.

There was a remonstrance, and then a pulling and dragging scuffle, and, at last, a boxing match: the two dirty fellows, now even more cowardly than they were dirty, falling together upon one little boy, much their inferior in years, height, weight and strength, while he, nothing daunted, jumped about them, rolling his little fists round each other, making a good hit whenever he could, and taking all their heavy punishment like a Trojan. But he could not fail having the worst of it. His lips and nose were bruised, and spouted with blood; his left eye became unwillingly half shut up, and he staggered often, and was clean knocked down at last.

A little scream came from the girls' table, and at the same moment one of the dirty fellows said—"the master is coming out."

"Wait till I see," said Neddy, "and if he is not I'll come back to you."

He ran round the long desk, and was just applying his eye—his only available one—to

one of the spy-holes, when, ye Gods!—another eye, a well-known, large, greyish blue eye, a cold, shiny, white and blue delft eye, was in the act of doing the same thing, at the other side of the augur-hole.

Neddy's first impulse, was of course to start back, in terror; but the next instant, he stuck his own eye, as closely as ever he could, into the opening, shrewdly judging, that such a proceeding was the only one which could hinder his opponent from noting and ascertaining his personal identity. And now, it became a real trial of skill and endurance, between the two eyes; but, oh! the horrors of the ordeal, that Neddy had to endure! Sometimes, the large, greyish blue eye would withdraw itself, about the fourth part of an inch, from its own side of the partition, as if to admit light enough into the orifice, to enable it to mark the rival orb, and connect it with its owner; and then, the cold, freezy scintillations, which shot from it, curdled his very blood! Sometimes, it would

adhere as closely to its end of the hole, as did Neddy's at the other end; and then, all was darkness to Neddy's vision—but he thought the fringes of the two eyelids touched! and his trembling limbs scarce supported him. He winked, and blinked, and so did the antagonist organ—and then, he became assured, that the opposing eyelashes absolutely intertangled, and felt as if his own optic was to be drawn out of his head. Mental delusion almost possessed him. The cold, greyish blue eye, seemed to become self irradiated, and to swell into the compass of a shining crown piece, while it darted into his, rays of excruciating light. Still, however, he courageously held on, until at last, James Charles Buchmahon gave up the contest, and withdrew towards his bed-room door: upon which, Neddy hastened to his place at his desk, but not before he had ascertained by a glance across the room, that the two dirty fellows, having filched the fortune book from his pocket during his late trepidation, were

in the act of introducing it to the notice of the little dames, who sat to the old table in the recess. In fact, the alarm that had been given by one of the dirty fellows, that “the master was coming,” was but a ruse to send Neddy to the spy-hole, in order to enable himself, the more easily to recover his precious property; and this was now evident, from the two friends being seen, without the least apprehension of the approach of that said master, endeavouring, in high glee, to impart a portion of their own nastiness, to the pure little hearts and minds before them. Neddy had scarcely resumed his seat, when James Charles entered the school-room, and Neddy’s eyes, or rather eye, fastened on his book. Almost at the same moment, the little voice—Neddy knew it well—which had before uttered a little scream, broke into a sudden fit of crying. Neddy again glanced to the girl’s table. The child who was crying, had just flung into the middle of the room, the atrocious fortune-book; and he was

about to vault across the desk, a second time to possess himself of the evidence of blackguardism, when James Charles Buchmahon saved him the trouble, by picking it up himself.

The two detected dirty fellows, were slinking to their places. "Have the goodness to stand where ye are, gentlemen," entreated James Charles Buchmahon. They stood stock still before him. He sat down to his desk, put on his spectacles, and deliberately began to read the fortune-book.

In a few seconds, he suddenly stopped reading, drew his chair smartly back from his desk, raised his hands and eyes, and then screwed the latter into those of the base culprits; he resumed his studies, again pushed back from the desk, again made a silent appeal upwards, and again as silently told the two dirty fellows what he thought of their playful device, and of themselves, and what they had to expect for their cleverness. Having quite finished the

rare volume, he stood up, and beckoned them towards him.

They came. He held it open in his hand, before their eyes, pointed to it, and uttered the one word, "read." He then pointed to the girl's table, tapped the now closed book with his fore-finger; slowly opened his desk, slowly deposited therein the "sybilline leaves," and uttered another monosyllable—"kneel."

The despairing blackguards knelt.

"No!" interrupted James Charles Buchmahon with great and severe dignity, stepping back from them—"I was wrong; do not kneel; go on all fours; prop yourselves on your knees and hands together, and remain in that position; I will explain to you why, anon."

Again they obeyed him, their dirty faces growing pallid as death, and their dirty hearts quailing with an undefinable fear and horror, at this unprecedented proceeding.

James Charles Buchmahon, again returned to the desk, now standing upright before it,

however. Very slowly and solemnly, he next drew out his pocket handkerchief, used it—and what a quavering, trumpet sound there then was!—folded and rolled it up, into a round hardish lump; held it in both hands tightly; bent his head over it, and began rubbing across it, from side to side, the base of his very broad-backed and hooked nose. Great awe fell upon his subjects, big and little. The process described,—which they used to call, “sharpening his beak,” was one which, by experience, they well knew betokened the approach of some terrific catastrophe; while they were also very well aware, that during the sharpening of the beak, the two bluish grey eyes were scowling round, from one to another of them—as before remarked, under their proper brows, and over their proper spectacles.

The beak was sharpened. The pocket handkerchief was unfolded from its sphere-like form; shaken, and put up. James Charles Buchmahon then produced before himself, a

horn snuff-box, of his own manufacture ; tapped it often ; gravely took off it's lid ; dipped deep his finger and thumb, into its pungent contents ; put on it's lid ; returned it into his waistcoat pocket, sniffed up in a long, long-drawn sniff, about half of the huge pinch, he had abstracted from it ; and then he uttered three words more.

“ Master Edmund Fennell.”

The individual so summoned, left his seat, and stood before the throne.

James Charles applied his spectacles close to Neddy's face, deliberately and diligently scanning it, now upwards and downwards, now from side to side. With much suavity, he then took him by the shoulder, and induced him to turn round and round, that he might critically inspect the evidences left upon his dress of his fall on the very dusty, old, oak floor.

This investigation ended, a piercing “ whew ! ” which continued while his breath lasted, fol-

lowed it; the "whew" was, by the way, usual on such occasions as the present, and it used to traverse the boys' heads, as if a long needle had been thrust into one ear, and out through the other. And then, after finishing the pinch of snuff, he politely addressed Neddy.

"Why, sir, you are quite a buffer—a perfect Mendoza. I had no conception whatsoever, sir, that my seminary had the honor of containing such an eminent pugilist. But, sir, any young gentleman, who aspires to become a bully, under this roof, must begin by fighting with me, and more than that—he must become my conqueror, before I can permit the English Academy, to be turned into a bear-garden. But we shall speak of this, sir, when I shall have discharged a more pressing duty. In the mean time, Master Edmund Fennell, have the kindness to kneel down—a little apart, however, from those two prone animals," pointing to the two dirty fellows, who of course still continued on their hands and knees.

Neddy could have said something in his own

defence, but he was either too proud, or too much put out to do so; or perhaps he wisely reserved himself for the re-investigation of his case, which seemed to have been promised; so, he knelt down.

A new fit of crying and sobbing was heard from the old table in the recess, and a beautiful little girl, her cheeks streaming tears, ran forward to the judgment seat.

And—"Sir, sir," she exclaimed, clasping her little hands, "do not punish Ned Fennell—he doesn't deserve it!—he is a good little boy, and often comes to see my father, with old priest Connell—and my father says he is a good boy—and so does priest Connell;—and least of all does he deserve your anger, for what has happened this morning! I saw and heard it all, sir—and I can make you sure, that he has done nothing wrong,—no—but done every thing that was right, sir. Oh! good Mr. James Charles Buchmahon, do not take him into your room, and hurt him!"

Neddy had not shed a tear before this mo-

ment; after an upward glance, at his little advocate, he now cried heartily—but they were happy tears he shed. James Charles Buchmahon stood motionless—his large, cold eyes, became half covered by their upper lids. He smiled, in something like the kindliness of human nature, and the boys thought, as well as they could judge through his spectacles, that a softening moisture came over them. At all events, he quietly sat down, took the little girl by the hand, drew her to his knee, and began to question her in a low voice.

She informed him that Neddy's scuffle, in the first instance, with the two dirty fellows, arose out of his endeavouring to hinder them from approaching the girls' table with their atrocious book of fortunes. She repeated the words that had passed between Neddy and them; and how Neddy put the book into the pocket of his jacket, and then, how they fell upon him, while he would not give up his prize, but defended himself as well as he was

able. James Charles listened attentively, and questioned the child over again, and very minutely. When she had said all she could say, he bent his lips to her ear and whispered a few words. The little thing clapped her hands, dashed aside with them the tears and the golden hair at once, which were both blinding her, and her lovely little face was one glowing smile, as she whispered in her turn—"Oh! thank you, sir." But James Charles Buchmahon, becoming somewhat scandalized at so unaffected a show of feeling and of nature raised his fore finger and said, in almost one of his freezing tones—"Now go back to your seat, Miss Mac Neary."

Little Helen, after making her little salaam, obeyed; but not before her smiling eyes, and those of Neddy Fennell, now also smiling, had contrived to meet.

A death-like silence ensued.

"It was as if the general pulse
Of life stood still, and nature made a pause,
An awful pause, prophetic of her end!"

And during the "awful pause" James Charles Buchmahon, half inclining himself backwards, and holding his head perfectly erect, while his hands hung clenched by his sides, frowned downwards upon the two dirty fellows, in, as it were, speechless abhorrence and indignation.

At length he broke the pause by uttering, in tones, that seemed to come from the depths of his labouring bosom—

"Quadrupeds! become, for a moment, bipeds—imitate humanity by standing upright."

With the facility of dancing bears the quadrupeds did as they were bid.

"Quadrupeds! how many senses are there?"

"Five sir!" they bawled out in a breath.

"You, quadruped, to my right hand, name those five senses."

"Feeling, hearing, seeing, tasting, and smelling, sir."

All this seemed very wide of the mark, and puzzled the dirty fellows, and the whole school besides, exceedingly.

“ So far, so good. Well, then, none of my five senses, ever yet perceived, so as to cause my reflective powers to apprehend, and thereby my understanding to arrive at the conclusion that the English Academy was founded and instituted by me, for the training up of any of the inferior animals—of any of the brute creation, in fact. I could not have possibly imagined that, at this time of my life, I was to degenerate into an instructor of beast brutes—aye, of the foulest among the foul brutes—of foul, snorting swine. But you have undeceived me. And allow me to ask you, how has it come to pass that you have been enabled to stand upright in your sty, and present yourselves, upon two feet, at the threshold of the English Academy? By what ‘mighty magic’ has been wrought the presumptuous deception?”

The quadrupeds did not venture to answer the question.

“ I say to you both, that in daring to stand

erect on your hinder legs, you have attained the very climax of audacity. But—" here James Charles slowly took out of his desk the cat-o'-nine-tails—" but I will assert over you the outraged dignity of human nature. Great as may have been the spell which enabled you, for a season, to look like human beings, I can overmaster that spell by a higher one, and force you to resume your pristine positions on the earth. Down, therefore! Down again on all fours—I command your re-transformation!" he waved the cats slowly round his head, "abandon the bearing of humanity, and once more move along with prone visages and snouts, delving into your native mire and filth."

The swine, as James Charles now called them, evidently did not comprehend this long harangue, and only glared at him with pallid visages.

"Did you not hear me, unclean brutes?"

"Yes, sir," they gasped.

"Obey, then!"—a hissing of whipcord came round their ears, and then its crash descended

on their bare heads. They shouted, clapped their hands to their smarting craniums, and jumped aside. The cat next applied her claws to the backs of those hands; and there was a still louder yell, and a wider jump aside.

“ We don’t know what you want us to do, sir !” they screamed out.

But James Charles Buchmahon soon made them know; and again they were on their hands and knees.

“ Grunt now, ye swine—manifest your nature a little further. Grunt !” he again elevated the cat.

They earnestly assured him they could not grunt.

“ Can’t ? I will soon show all the young gentlemen here that I have not mistaken your nature or qualities—come, grunt, I say !” and the cat was scratching wherever she could insert a claw.

“ Ugh, ugh—ugh, ugh—oh-ah !” they at last grunted and shouted together.

“ Did I not judge aright, gentlemen of the

English Academy—hark, how plainly they can speak their original language—walk forward, now, swine—but still, still, on your four legs—do you hear? and grunt as ye go, that all human beings may avoid you.”

Round and round the school-room he made them crawl, while, per force, they still imitated the discordant sounds of the animals they personified. In vain did they attempt to escape under desks or forms. With a smart cane, which he had now substituted for the cat, their merciless driver soon hunted them out again to the middle of the floor; and if they ceased their motion, for one instant, or refused to grunt, down came the cane on them.

At last, growing tired of his occupation, James Charles halted, and allowed them to do the same.

“So far swine,” he said, “you have been only enforced to resume your proper natures, and display your proper attributes. Real punishment for your crimes you have not yet

received. Punishment, first, for your unnameable crimes at yonder table, and all your proceedings connected therewith; punishment, secondly, for your cowardly swinish crime of attacking together one little boy; one little human creature, certainly inferior to you in mere brute strength,—and rending and disfiguring the comely human features that providence had blessed him with. I am still your debtor I admit. But please God, I shall not long be so.”

Only waiting to imbide a fresh pinch of snuff, as a kind of piquante stimulus, to his already perfect good will, for the task before him. James Charles then belaboured the two dirty rascals, from the nape of the neck, to the termination of the back-bone—allowing them, at last, to go halting and roaring to their places, only because his arm was no longer able to hit them hard enough.

Again returning to his desk, he again called out, “ Master Edmund Fennell—” speaking

still very loudly, though the boy was within a very few inches of him. Neddy arose, willingly enough.

“ I, the more readily, and the more easily have been induced to remit the punishment due to your offence, sir, of repelling even by one single ungentlemanlike blow, the attack made, no matter how brutally, upon you, because your late re-entrance into the English Academy, after a long absence from it, since your good father’s death—” Neddy burst out crying—“ may have caused you to forget that I require from the youth of my establishment, not the turbulence of prize-fighters, but the habits of young gentlemen. Sir, there shall be no boxing matches in the English Academy. If there be cause of quarrel, it must be immediately referred to me, and justice shall be dealt to both parties. Go now, Master Edmund Fennell, and return your respectful thanks to Miss Helen Mac Neary, to whose generous interference, you stand chiefly indebted on this important

occasion; go, sir—if indeed the young lady, can bear to regard, even for an instant, the present very ungentlemanlike state of your features.”

Neddy was instantly hastening, as fast as he could walk, his arms wide open, to obey this reasonable and pleasant request.

“ Stop, sir,” roared James Charles Buchmahon. This unexpected countermand sounded like a gun-shot in Neddy’s ears, and he certainly did stop.

“ Pray, sir, in what seminary did you acquire that uncouth and bruin-like method of paying your respects to a young lady? Retire some distance back, and make an obeisance to Miss Mac Neary : thus, sir; look at me, sir, if you please.”

Ned looked accordingly, and beheld James Charles Buchmahon advance his finger and thumb to the brim of his cream-coloured beaver, keeping his elbow turned out, and his arm well rounded as he did so; and then

he beheld him solemnly raise the beaver from his bald, grey head, sway it downward gradually and gracefully, and bend his body, until his head came on a line with his hips; and James Charles, during all this process, smiled and simpered his very best, and at last said, in a fascinating tone—"Miss Helen Mac Neary, I return you my most sincere and respectful acknowledgments."—"Now sir." and James Charles again stood very strait, and holding his head very high, proud of the perfection of his politeness, while his eye took a short circuit round the school-room, to notice the universal admiration, which his dignified gracefulness must have called forth. Neddy Fennell contrived to turn his face from the observation of his preceptor, while he performed the task prescribed to him; and then gave—repeating every syllable he had heard—so correct an imitation, in tone, manner, and action of James Charles Buchmahon, that the row of young ladies before him, and all

the boys around him, were nearly suffocated with the attempt they made to suppress their laughter.

“ That will do sir : you may now retire to your place,” added James Charles.

And Neddy did so ; and afterwards took his own time and opportunity for returning, in his own way, to Miss Helen Mac Neary, “ his most sincere and respectful acknowledgments ;” nor is it mentioned, that the little lady disliked this repetition of a display of his gratitude, or indeed, that she considered Neddy’s way on the occasion, as very much inferior to James Charles Buchmahon’s way.—But this looks too like telling tales out of school.

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